A digital tool kit for integrating theater arts into standards-based curriculum, featuring:

- Historical Background
- Production Notes
- Artists' Insights
- Suggested Lessons
- Student Activities
- Links to Rich Media
- Resource Directory

StageNotes Producer's Edition
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Molly Smith, Edgar Dobie

Second Stage Theatre
Carole Rothman, Casey Reitz

DEAR EVAN HANSEN

BOOK BY
STEVEN LEVENSON

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
BENJ PASEK & JUSTIN PAUL

SCENIC DESIGN BY
DAVID KORINS

PROJECTION DESIGN BY
PETER NIGRINI

COSTUME DESIGN BY
EMILY REBHOLZ

LIGHTING DESIGN BY
JAPHY WEIDEMAN

SOUND DESIGN BY
NEVIN STEINBERG

HAIR DESIGNER
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MUSIC DIRECTOR
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ALEX LACAMOIRE

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
DANNY MEFFORD

DIRECTED BY
MICHAEL GREIF

Originally presented by Arena Stage – July 9, 2015 to August 23, 2015
New York premiere at Second Stage – March 26, 2016 to May 29, 2016
Original Cast Recording Available on Atlantic Records.
Dear Evan Hansen,

Today is going to be a great day, and here's why:

- Dozens of schools have booked tickets for your show. Just imagine how thrilling it will be to welcome thousands of students — their teachers and parents — to Broadway's Music Box Theatre, and to theaters presenting Dear Evan Hansen across North America. (Beginning this fall, in London, too!) We know that your story will resonate with them, as it is so apropos to teenage life today, and hopefully, by sharing your story, you will inspire them to reflect upon and share their own.

- We want them to make the most of their theater experience, so we've created this study guide to give them a glimpse into your world and how it was created, as well as to provide teachers with follow-up activities and discussion prompts for the classroom. We realize that each classroom is unique, so we hope that teachers will feel free to pick and choose the sections that are most relevant and appropriate for their students and curriculum. So as not to leave out the adults, we've also included a page for parents and teachers with links to articles that relate to many of the topics and themes covered in your show.

- So, get ready, Evan. The students are coming with their exuberance and energy, and they eagerly await your story.

- It's time to step into the sun....

Sincerely,

Me
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CAST OF CHARACTERS
FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF BOOK WRITER STEVEN LEVENSON

Evan Hansen (17) Smart, sincere, and crippling self-conscious, Evan prefers to hover in the background, a supporting player in his own life, too afraid to step forward into the spotlight and risk ridicule or, what might be worse, no one noticing him at all.

Heidi Hansen (40s) Evan's mother. Overworked and stretched too thin, Heidi loves her son fiercely, but fears they have begun to grow apart. She is prepared to do anything to repair the damage.

Zoe Murphy (16) Sensitive and sophisticated, Zoe couldn't care less about the status games and popularity rites of high school. Funny and bright, she feels a terrible ambivalence about her brother's death, finding it difficult to forgive him for all he did, and forgive the part of herself that finds relief in the fact that he's gone.

Connor Murphy (17) An angry, disaffected loner, Connor has been a troubled kid for as long as anyone can remember, an enigma and a source of endless consternation to his long-suffering parents and sister.

Cynthia Murphy (40s) Connor and Zoe's mother. To Evan, she seems to be the perfect mother, nurturing, available, and willing to talk about anything. To her own children, it's a bit more complicated.

Larry Murphy (40s) Connor and Zoe's father. Though often tense and taciturn, Larry shows a different face to the world, representing for Evan the dad he always wished for: strong, confident, and, more than anything, reliable, someone to be counted on.

Jared Kleinman (17) Droll and sarcastic, Jared claims to be forced by his parents to hang out with family friend Evan, for whom he ostensibly has nothing but disdain. Jared covers his own obvious insecurities with a well-practiced braggadocio and a know-it-all arrogance.

Alana Beck (17) Alana is an incredibly genuine person. Everything she does comes from a place of deep honesty and tremendous feeling. All of the characters in this musical put up masks of sorts. For Alana, it's a façade of cheerfulness. She is always ready with a smile, a note of encouragement. This hides the loneliness underneath.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

“Anybody Have a Map?” .......... Heidi, Cynthia
“Waving Through a Window” .. Evan, Company
“For Forever” ................. Evan
“Sincerely, Me” ........ Connor, Evan, Jared
“Requiem.” ................. Zoe, Larry, Cynthia
“If I Could Tell Her” .......... Evan, Zoe
“Disappear” ............... Connor, Evan, Alana, Jared, Cynthia, Larry, Zoe
“You Will Be Found” .......... Evan, Company

ACT II

“Sincerely, Me” (Reprise) .. Connor, Jared
“To Break in a Glove” ....... Larry, Evan
“Only Us” .................... Zoe, Evan
“Good for You” .............. Heidi, Alana, Jared, Evan
“You Will Be Found” .......... Company (Reprise)
“Words Fail” ............. Evan
“So Big/So Small” .......... Heidi
“Finale” ................ Company

To listen to the Dear Evan Hansen Original Broadway Cast Recording, explore character-inspired playlists and more, visit the Dear Evan Hansen artist profile on Spotify. Have you created a show-inspired playlist of your own? Share it with us @DearEvanHansen.
@BenSPLATT
Say what you want about it, but in my opinion, there’s nothing as exciting and awe-inspiring as a really good piece of new musical theatre.

@pasekandpaul
Cooking up something new this week

@benjpasek
Today was one of those creatively fulfilling days that can come once in a decade. Inspired & buzzing from being around such wonderful people

@LacketyLac
Planting some seeds #WholsEvanHansen

@pasekandpaul
Excited to announce our new (& 1st original) musical DEAR EVAN HANSEN is premiering in DC this summer at @arenastage!

@benjpasek
At the first day of rehearsal for Dear Evan Hansen in DC!

@lacketylac
Planting some seeds #WhoIsEvanHansen

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@DearEvanHansen
A huge congratulations to our #DearEvanHansen family on a successful #openingnight!

@The Tony Awards
@DearEvanHansen accepts a #TonyAward2017 for Best Musical.

@TheaterMania
@DearEvanHansen makes highest-charting @billboard debut of a cast album since 1961

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**@pasekandpaul**  
New songs are brewing at #dearevanhansen rehearsals @2STNYC w/@rachelbayjones and @JLTsayswhat! #whoisevanhansen

**@DearEvanHansen**  
Broadway performances begin in Nov!

**@DearEvanHansen**  
“This is the dream. This is what I’ve been dreaming about my whole life.”  
@pasekandpaul  
#FirstRehearsal

**@pasekandpaul**  
The one and only @LacketyLac CRUSHING the orchestrations for #dearevanhansen at today’s sitzprobe!!!

**@DearEvanHansen**  
Congratulations to the entire #DearEvanHansen at @2stnyc family! Now it’s time to celebrate!

**@RecordingAcad**  
Congrats Best Musical Theater Album – @DearEvanHansen #GRAMMYs

**@LacketyLac**  
Londooooooon! We’re coming to ya! #DearEvanHansen will have its first-ever London production at the Noël Coward Theatre in 2019.

**@Mirvish**  
#BlueHatNight has become our favorite first performance tradition—Toronto, we loved painting the town blue with you for our International Debut.  
#DearEvanHansen  
#DEHToronto

**@SmithsonianMag**  
Artifacts from @DearEvanHansen come to the collections of @amhistorymuseum.
ON THE ROLE OF A BOOK WRITER

In the case of the musical, as a book writer, your job in a lot of cases is to support the score and to make sure the most important moments emotionally are happening in song. So, it's a lot of figuring out when to step out of the way, and to make sure that you've laid the ground enough — and not too much — so that those characters can make the leap into song.

ON CREATING A NEW MUSICAL

In a way, there's a great freedom about [creating an original work]. We are not beholden to any preexisting vision, but with that freedom comes a lot of anxiety — because we can do anything we want. That can be both freeing and terrifying. [As told to The Washington Times]

ON COLLABORATING WITH BENJ PASEK AND JUSTIN PAUL

I think the role of the book writer can be very different things. In this case, since there was no source material, it was really the three of us coming up with this idea together. We started with this idea of “connection” — people’s desire and thirst and need for connection. My instinct was to create a story about someone who could not connect in a world that is all about connection and interconnectedness. What does it mean to have a protagonist who is somehow unable to connect? So slowly, Evan began to take shape.

It seemed like the best idea was for me to just write the story like it was a play, because we didn’t have anything else to go on. So I started writing the first act. Where we had talked about possibly placing songs, I would leave space in the script. I would either have nothing or I would have a long monologue — a soliloquy, really — with a character diving into his thoughts to suggest what was happening emotionally. That’s how it all started, with this first draft.

From there, Benj and Justin started writing songs, but there was a lot of back and forth and rewriting. It was an endless dialogue — two steps forward and one step back — because you are building this thing together. It's a little bit chicken and the egg. You have to be constantly making it and remaking it to accommodate one another — always in service to the story.

ON WRITING PLAYS VERSUS MUSICALS

It’s so different in so many ways. The big obvious difference is that it’s collaborative from the start — and that your vision is not the only vision. It’s about finding a shared vision with your collaborators. You want to be a little bit hidden in the background at times — you want the music to be the star and the music to do the heavy lifting. So it’s a lot of cutting the things you love the most, and allowing the ideas that you have or the dialogue that you’ve written to become a song. It’s actually really amazing, though, because it feels like something that you just had in your head becomes three dimensional in a way that you could never imagine.

ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CHARACTER IN THE SHOW

We knew we wanted to tell a contemporary story that’s set today, and we knew that we had to somehow talk about social media. I compare it to Bye Bye Birdie, when they’re using the telephones in “The Telephone Hour.” It’s like they’re not using the telephones to talk about telephones, they’re using them because that’s how their world functions. And if we tried to tell our story today without cell phones and social media, there would be a real inauthenticity about the show. And at the same time we wanted to be sure we’re using social media as a storytelling device and we were never interested in exploring social media as a theme or as an idea. We always wanted to make sure it was grounded in the story and part of the grammar of the show. [As told to Broadway Direct]

ON CREATING TWO VERY DIFFERENT FAMILIES FOR DEAR EVAN HANSEN

Both families really came into focus as the story itself took shape. Larry and Cynthia Murphy, we knew, had to represent everything that Evan’s own splintered family wasn’t. His fantasy of what two stable and emotionally available parents might look like. As with all fantasies, Evan’s rose-colored vision of the Murphys turns out to have a tenuous relationship to the reality underneath, but that discovery will only come later for him. In contrast to this ostensibly perfect family, Evan’s mother, Heidi Hansen, strives to be what her son needs her to be, but everything she does seems only to push him further away. The most important thing for us, in creating these characters, was to present them honestly and without judgment: three parents striving in their own flawed and imperfect way to do what’s best for their children.

Original Source Material:


STEVEN LEVENSON (Book) Author of The Unavoidable Disappearance of Tom Durnin (Roundabout Theatre Company, Outer Critics Circle Award), Core Values (Ars Nova, Drama Desk nomination), Seven Minutes in Heaven (Colt Coeur), The Language of Trees (Roundabout), and the book for Dear Evan Hansen (Second Stage; Obie, Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical and Best Book of a Musical; Arena Stage, Helen Hayes Award). His plays are published by Dramatists Play Service and Playscripts. A graduate of Brown University and former artist in residence at Ars Nova, he is a founding member of Colt Coeur and an alumnus of MCC’s Playwrights Coalition.
How did you become a composing team?

**BP**: We both went to the University of Michigan for musical theater. We went there to be actors. For a lot of people who love the theater, when you’re young, acting is your way in. But halfway through school we realized maybe we’re not cut out to be performers…. After many failed attempts to get good roles in our school shows, we saw the writing on the wall and thought, “Why don’t we write our own show, and see what we can make of that?” [As told to *Metro Weekly*]

**JP**: We just started doing it for fun. We were freshmen in college when we began tinkering. It was fun to develop songs thinking from characters’ perspectives. We decided to string some of these songs together and make a song cycle our sophomore year. People were receptive. I think before we even knew what was happening we had begun a collaboration. [As told to *Metro Weekly*]

What role did music play in your childhood?

**JP**: I grew up in a pretty musical household. Neither of my parents are professional musicians, but they’re very, very musical. My dad and my mom would sit down and play the piano. I grew up playing a lot of music in church, and singing with my parents. I started taking piano lessons when I was 7. So they were always very encouraging and they knew that I had a love for it and a knack for it. [As told to *Metro Weekly*]

In addition to being a performer, I always wanted to be in the pit orchestra, playing piano or percussion. I always saw myself being involved on the musical side of things in musical theater. I just figured it would be interpreting and teaching and working out other people’s music. I hadn’t really planned on it being my own music. [As told to *Metro Weekly*]

**BP**: My mom created a bunch of kids’ albums where she would document whatever we were doing growing up and she would turn those moments into songs. She had a children’s music group in our local area of Philadelphia. So I grew up just witnessing my mom, who’s a psychologist — not a professional musician — turning life moments into song. That’s essentially what we do every day, when we try to create theater. Watching her interpret things that were happening in the world, or in my world as a kid, and setting them to music — I think that really sparked an interest in writing and creating and interpreting life moments into song lyrics. [As told to *Metro Weekly*]

Facebook and YouTube were instrumental in circulating your early music. Can you elaborate on the role the Internet played in launching your career?

**JP**: For us, in terms of songwriting, having our stuff out online was a huge way to be able to connect with people, and musical theater fans all over the country and all over the world, in a way that couldn’t have happened 20 years ago. People knew our songs and knew our music before we ever had a show in New York City.

**BP**: In terms of our careers, I think we were in the right place at the right time, and started writing songs at the right time. We were in college in 2005 and that was a year after Facebook began. And the year that YouTube began. I think that really changed the way that people had access to new material.

**BP**: Before that, shows needed to exist in New York — you needed at least an Off-Off-Broadway production to spread the word. What was so revolutionary about Facebook and YouTube was this democratization of who could have access to putting stuff online, and being able to see it right away. So, you could be in Iowa or Singapore and you could see your
COMPOSING WITH PASEK & PAUL

content immediately without having to go to New York. And as writers, we didn’t have to go through any traditional means of getting it out there [through agents or producers] — we just put it online. [As told to TCG]

Tell us a bit about how the idea for Dear Evan Hansen originated. I understand that it was born out of your own high school experience.

BP: There was a student who was sort of anonymous. He died of a drug overdose, and it was sort of unclear whether it was intentional or not. After he passed away the student body became very, very close to him. Everybody sort of claimed him as their best friend after he died, and began to write their college essays about him, and began to talk about how amazing he was and how important he was in their lives. [As told to Metro Weekly]

When Justin and I met in college, and we began to write musicals, this moment from my high school days continued to be fascinating. We talked about exploring it in a musical. Since then, we’ve brought up a lot of other themes that we wanted to talk about — there’s sort of a need to connect, the need to be part of a community, the need to be a part of something larger than yourself, especially in the digital, isolated age that we now find ourselves in. We began to explore how we could take those themes and turn them into a musical. And that’s when the amazing Steven Levenson came into the picture and helped us to churn our ideas into an actual plot. [As told to Metro Weekly]

JP: We noticed certain things about our culture ... some things that were fascinating about the modern response to tragedy and loss. We became very interested in the world’s response to loss. And how people grieve and also communicate in the era of social media.

JP: It made us think about our desire to connect, and our desire to be a part of something larger than ourselves. Despite our great connectedness through Facebook and Twitter and all of these social media platforms, despite being as connected as we’ve ever been as a society ...

BP: We’re more isolated than ever. All of us, teenagers and adults alike.

JP: And so we wanted to use that as the backdrop of our story, but we’re telling it through the specific story of a family. This family is looking for that kind of connection, and in losing someone they love, they try to fill that void.

Can you talk a bit about the character of Evan Hansen? He is a risky, unusual protagonist.

JP: It’s definitely an unusual one in that he’s riddled with issues and anxieties, and with lots of self-esteem issues and a lot of other things. But I think that’s what makes him very accessible and identifiable and relatable. Hopefully everyone can go and see the show and see a little bit of Evan in themselves, and feel like they can connect with him, or at least connect with the situations that he finds himself in — he doesn’t know the right thing to say to people, or how to fit into a conversation, or how to be himself and not try to create or embellish a story about himself that is better than what he thinks his real life is. It’s a different sort of character and maybe not your typical musical theater leading man, but that’s definitely what we were hoping to write — a contemporary and relevant and accessible character. [As told to Metro Weekly]

BP: Traditionally, in Musical Theater 101, you learn to try to write a protagonist who people like and root for on their journey. In Dear Evan Hansen, we have a protagonist who does things that are really morally questionable. It’s our jobs as writers to try to get the audience to identify with him and to support why he does what he does. We wanted to try to create a character who was more complex — and more nuanced — than maybe more traditional musical theater characters. We’ll let critics and audiences be the judge of whether or not we have succeeded or failed. [As told to Metro Weekly]

Original Source Material:


Benjamin Pasek and Justin Paul

Benjamin Pasek and Justin Paul are the songwriting team behind the Tony, Oscar, Grammy and Golden Globe Award-winning musical Dear Evan Hansen. Their work includes the original motion picture soundtrack for Trolls, and the original Broadway cast recording for Dear Evan Hansen. They have received a Tony nomination for best musical, and an Academy Award for best original song (“You Will Be Found”). They are both graduates of the University of Michigan Musical Theatre Program and currently serve on the Board of Directors for the Dramatists Guild Foundation.
Dear Evan Hansen marks the eighth original musical you have directed, including your award-winning productions of Rent, Next to Normal, and Grey Gardens. Can you talk a bit about the process of developing a new musical? What drew you to this project in particular?

What drew me to the piece initially was the opportunity to work with these collaborators, who I thought were exciting, and young, and very interesting theater makers. And then, when I first heard about what the piece was, I was very drawn to the complicated and emotional lives of the characters. I really thought that Benj, Justin, and Steven were creating a piece where the characters … had very good reasons to express themselves through song and music. In such a heightened emotional arena it … the stakes are so high that it feels like the characters are singing for their lives. 

How would you describe the story of Evan Hansen?

It’s a really truthful, smart, and sophisticated story about how 17-year-olds live in the world today … and about how parents relate to their children and how kids relate to their parents…. [It’s] about a lonely kid, and how a family in crisis, a grieving family, in many ways adopts this lonely kid. And this kid finds a lot of love and a lot of support from this family, but also always knows that in many ways he doesn’t deserve their love and support. At the same time the family is dealing with an extraordinary loss. And … they really make this kid a part of their family because they need this kid to be a part of their family. It fulfills an enormous need that they’re suffering from — to have a surrogate son.

What message would you like for people to take away from Dear Evan Hansen?

That everybody deserves a chance. And everybody deserves a second chance.

Michael Greif

MICHAEL GREIF (Director) received his fourth Tony nomination and a Helen Hayes Award for his work on Dear Evan Hansen. Other Broadway credits: Rent, Grey Gardens, Next to Normal, Never Gonna Dance, If/ Then, War Paint. Recent work includes Our Lady of Kibeho and Angels in America (NY’s Signature Theatre); The Low Road, The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide…. Regional work includes premieres and revivals at Williamstown Theatre Festival (ten seasons), La Jolla Playhouse (AD, five seasons), Arena Stage, Center Stage, Mark Taper Forum, Dallas Theater Center, Trinity Repertory Company. Television: “RENT: Live.” Greif holds a BS from Northwestern University and an MFA from the University of California, San Diego.

Danny Mefford

My ideology is that everything that happens on stage should flow from the story. If you are thinking about the why they are dancing rather than just enjoying the moment, I haven’t done my job correctly. It should seem the actors have no choice but to dance. —Danny Mefford

Danny Mefford

DANNY MEFFORD (Choreographer) Broadway: Fun Home, Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, The Bridges of Madison County. Other New York: Love’s Labour’s Lost, The Good Person of Szechwan, Much Ado About Nothing, Pump Boys and Dinettes for City Center Encores!, Melancholy Play, Dance Dance Revolution. Other: The Sound of Music (U.S. tour), Miss You Like Hell (La Jolla Playhouse). Directing: Becoming Liv Ullmann (NY Fringe), Wasted (Ars Nova), The Maids. Drama Desk, and Lortel and Astaire Award nominee for choreography. MFA from Brown University, BS from the University of Evansville.
Q: What exactly is the role of the Music Supervisor and how do you work with the composers to deliver the musical elements of the show?

A: The actual job of the music supervisor is to oversee all of the music in the show. I teach music to the actors. I work as a liaison between the composer and the actors so if the composer wants to have a phrase sung in a certain way or a song to be interpreted in a certain way, he will tell me and I will tell the actors and/or the music director. All musicals need a music director, but not all shows have a music supervisor. A music director, in our case, is the person who is actually conducting eight shows a week, playing piano, leading the band. As music supervisor, I have global supervision without having to be at the theatre for every performance.

As music supervisor I also work with the band to give them notes about how I think the music should be interpreted. I also work with the sound designer and give him notes about balance — “For this song I need the acoustic guitar to be softer, and for this other song I would love for you to play with the amount of reverb you have on the singer’s voice.” I also work with the director of the show, Michael Greif. He will give me notes about certain things that he sees, like if he thinks that something isn’t sounding clear or if there’s an issue of musical timing. It’s my job to actually figure out how to help music time out with the lights and time out with the scene so that it feels right and organic and it is to the director’s wishes.

So it’s a lot of servicing. I cater to the director. I cater to the composer. I try to make the actors feel comfortable. And that is what I do just as a music supervisor without even discussing the fact that I’m also the orchestrator!

Q: Tell us about your role as orchestrator.

A: The job of an orchestrator is to actually write down what every individual instrument in the orchestra plays.

As an orchestrator, it was my job to decide what I thought was the best number of musicians to have in the band for Dear Evan Hansen, which has eight players. And then it was my job to actually write out what we call “charts” — the sheet music for the band. So, for example, if I want the strings to play a chord, I have to sit down and figure out, “OK, the violin plays this note, the cello plays that note, and the viola plays this note, and the three of them together make this chord.” I make decisions about what instruments play at any given time, because you don’t want to have all eight instruments playing every second of the show — you need to use different colors at different moments. For example: The guitarist doesn’t play just one type of guitar; he has an electric guitar and a steel-string guitar. It’s my job to decide which of those instruments he plays in any moment based on what I think sounds best for that song. I could have also asked for other guitars, like a mandolin or a nylon-string acoustic, but I didn’t think those were the right flavors to have in the score. Same thing for the bass player: He has an electric bass and an acoustic bass and I have to decide which of those two he’s going to use for which song, and when he’s playing the acoustic bass I decide if he should use the bow to play it or does he use his fingers to pluck it. I have to make those decisions and actually write that down for every bar of music in the show.

Q: That’s incredible because, when the composers give it to you, it might only be the piano part.

A: That’s exactly right. A composer might hear in his head what he wants, but he might not have the technique or the vocabulary to make it happen. So I’m a translator in that respect.

Q: You have experienced hearing loss since you were a child. How has this impairment affected your music and the work you do as musical supervisor?

A: My hearing loss probably makes me listen a little harder, makes me listen a little more closely to music. It’s hard for me to hear someone when they are talking from far away, so because of that it allows me to live in my own bubble. I think that actually developed a lot of focus for me, because I can really zero in on music and just tune out the world and everything around me. Maybe because of the fact that I have to work to listen, it makes me really get into finer details of music that by now are very second nature to me. I often wonder, Is my handicap actually an asset? [As told to the Miami Herald]


ALEX LACAMOIRE has won three Tonys and three Grammys for his work on the Broadway musicals Hamilton, Dear Evan Hansen, and In The Heights. He won his fourth Grammy producing the soundtrack for The Greatest Showman, and is the recipient of the 2018 Kennedy Center Honors Award for his work on Hamilton. As Music Director, Arranger and/or Orchestrator on/off Broadway: Bring It On; Wicked; High Fidelity; Annie (2011 B’way revival); The People In The Picture; 9 to 5 (Drama Desk and Grammy noms.); Legally Blonde, Bat Boy: The Musical. Film and television credits include FX’s Fosse (Supervising Music Producer), The Greatest Showman (Executive Music Producer), Incredibles 2 (Arranger/Orchestrator), and Sesame Street (Emmy-nominated composer). Other credits: Godspell (2001 National Tour), orchestrations for The Rockettes and for the Oscars.
“Every design process has many steps — there is research involved, and ground plans, renderings, and models — but what was unique about the *Dear Evan Hansen* process was that I had an immediate visceral, emotional response to what I was seeing and hearing. I was trying to maintain this idea of people floating through a void, on tectonic plates of life with their own internal monologues and their own emotional space, while at the same time trying to connect to each other and the world around them.”

—David Korins

Q: Can you talk a bit about the role of projections in the show?

A: From the beginning of my involvement, which was shortly after the script and score were solidified and really before there was an idea of what the whole physical production would become, the basic question revolved around the fact that so much of this story is about the way our characters interact with an online community, with social media, with people who maybe are not communicating face to face, but rather via Facebook and Snapchat and various social media platforms. So Michael Greif asked me, “How do we put that community on stage and how do we represent them theatrically?” That was the challenge — how to breathe life into this online world, which is often very difficult to portray onstage, and how to do that theatrically. That was the most important part. How do we both show those interactions but keep them poetic and lyrical? The same way that emotion is lifted by song, we needed to take what are often rather mundane interactions, like looking at our Facebook feed on our cell phones, and make that into something theatrical.

Q: What is your process for building the projections?

A: The design process really started with coming up with a visual style and visual metaphor for how we wanted to present this information. So, long before we ever knew what David Korins was going to design for the set, there was this question of coming up with the style, coming up with a language for how image would be used and how it would move. So that’s very abstract. That’s about looking at art and other images and resources and trying to capture the feeling of the show. After that’s done, it’s then about how we implement that style. A major part of the design comes from social media and using fragments of images that are part of social media. In a way, all of the images in the production are also drawn from that. So even in the situations where what we’re trying to do is ultimately set a scene, like in the Murphys’ living room, the way we are manifesting that onstage is by actually using fragments of images you might believe are snapshots that someone took of the Murphys’ Thanksgiving dinner, for example. Then from that we’re taking tiny little fragments of those photographs and piecing together almost a memory what the Murphys’ living room might have been. So what that means is that the entire design is constructed out of tiny, tiny, little fragments of images that we’ve gathered from anywhere and everywhere so that the design is made up of over 1,000 images, and each of those is carefully processed and stitched together into this sort of collage that is the overall look of the show.

Peter Nigrini (Projection Design) Broadway: SpongeBob SquarePants; A Doll's House, Part 2; Amélie; An Act of God; The Heidi Chronicles; The Best Man; Fela!; 9 to 5. Elsewhere: The SpongeBob Musical (Chicago), Grounded and Here Lies Love (The Public Theater), Wakey Wakey (Signature Theatre), Notes From Underground (TFANA), Grace Jones Hurricane tour, Don Giovanni and Lucia di Lammermoor (Santa Fe), Blind Date (Bill T. Jones). For Nature Theater of Oklahoma: No Dice and Life & Times (Burgtheater, Vienna). Currently: Ain’t Too Proud, Beetlejuice, Dave (Arena Stage).
“Footwear or something like that, especially for guys, it tells a lot about someone: where they shop, what they want to project, what clique they’re in. Especially with teenagers, there’s so much about image and what you’re putting forward.”

— Emily Rebholz

“Footwear or something like that, especially for guys, it tells a lot about someone: where they shop, what they want to project, what clique they’re in. Especially with teenagers, there’s so much about image and what you’re putting forward.”

— Emily Rebholz

Emily Rebholz’s creative concept for the Dear Evan Hansen costumes.
Q: What’s it like keeping up with your schoolwork while also making your Broadway debut? Any tips for fellow students juggling their studies and school schedule with other interests and passions?

A: Juggling schoolwork and the show is tiring at times, but not difficult. If you really love the work you’re doing in theatre, that’s the fun part. School is just school. I used to do five shows at a time in community theatre, so juggling is something I’ve always done! The goal is to not let either overwhelm you and try not to get in over your head in either field. You’re going to have to balance your priorities based on where you’re struggling the most, but school is important for your brain and theatre is important for your soul, so it’s stressful but if you can do both, you absolutely should.

Q: What classes are you taking these days, and what are some of your favorite subjects?

I’m taking AP Calculus, AP US History, AP Literature, Physics Honors, and Spanish 2 (I used to take French). I love English. It employs the same skills you need for theatre: diving into a character and analyzing words on a page. There are also no right or wrong answers. You can interpret material however you want which, again, is like theatre.

Q: What book has had the greatest impact on you during your high school career thus far?

A: The Catcher in the Rye was a real game changer for me. It was my first encounter with an unreliable narrator, and Holden Caulfield is so three-dimensional; he tells us the story in his words and the book leaves us to make our own conclusions. It’s a masterclass in subtext and helped me so much when I played Frank Jr. in Catch Me if You Can at my high school who is, himself, an unreliable narrator.

Q: Tell us a bit about this theater company you founded at age 12. Any advice for students who might be interested in starting something similar in their own school or community?

A: Zneefrock Productions is the theatre company that I started as a Bar Mitzvah project. It sort of happened accidentally; we had just planned on doing one show to fundraise for NEXT for Autism, but it went so well and was so much fun that we decided to keep going every year. That year we did a Broadway cabaret, then a Beatles cabaret, then a Star Wars parody musical that my friend Adrian Dickson and I wrote, then a minimalist reimagining of Seussical, then a sort of Miscast cabaret, then Be More Chill, and then a reworking of The Last Five Years that explored how gender roles affect the story.

Our goal theatrically was to do things that nobody had ever seen before, and our goal charitably was to raise as much money as we could for autism. What I have to say for kids like me who love theatre and want to put it into their own hands is that there is absolutely nothing stopping you. If you have even a handful of friends that are passionate about it, too, you can get them all together and just do it. If money is an issue, you can put on a little cabaret, even in your backyard, to raise the money for licensing rights. The internet especially makes that aspect a lot easier: you can do a Kickstarter campaign and advertise on social media. Theatre is in control of whomever wants to be in control of it. It isn’t just for Broadway, and it isn’t even just for adults. It’s for everyone.

**Andrew Feldman as Evan Hansen (Broadway Cast)**

**The New York Times**

**HE’S 16 GOING ON STARDOM**

**BY MICHAEL PAULSON**


If there is a world in which theater kids rule, Andrew Barth Feldman seems to live there.

He wanders through the halls of his high school — a lank, 5-foot-6, Disney-obsessed 16-year-old prone to bursting into song — like the mayor… He’s long been a standout in their world — the kid who was organizing flash mobs at fourth-grade assembly, who founded his own theater company at 12 (it’s still going), who has been acting in school plays and camp shows and community theater productions for as long as anyone can remember.

And now he’s going to Broadway.

Even in an industry that delights in discovery, this teenager’s right-place-right-time story is one for the books: Last June, he was competing in the National High School Musical Theater Awards (known as the Jimmys) — which he won — when the lead producer of “Dear Evan Hansen” happened to be in the audience. She knew immediately she wanted him for the show, and on Jan. 30, 2019 he assume[d] the title role.
Michael Lee Brown (Broadway) and Stephen Christopher Anthony (National Tour) are both Alternates for the role of Evan Hansen. Here, they share some insights into their experience with the show, both on and off-stage.

Q: In addition to playing Evan Hansen multiple times a week, you’re in the unique position of having to know two other principal roles as well (Jared and Connor). Are there any special strategies for learning three roles at once?

A: Michael Lee Brown: Learning three characters has been helpful in gaining various perspectives of the show. Understanding what each character brings to the story is a key starting point in compartmentalizing their tracks. Writing a detailed track sheet (illustrating each character’s movement throughout the show from beginning to end) for each character was a constructive way for me to organize the technical aspect of the job - blocking, marks, entrances, exits, etc.- as well as create a visual timeline of each character’s physical, cerebral, and emotional journey.

Having these track sheets always on-hand keeps the information fresh in a performer’s mind. It essentially allows them to efficiently study the information they’ve assembled, and see each character’s own unique path.

A: Stephen Christopher Anthony: It’s interesting playing Evan, Connor, and Jared because all three characters greatly misunderstand each other within the play, but it’s my job to understand where they’re all coming from, and that they’re not so different. I feel if I could just sit them down and mediate a better conversation, they’d all end up best friends.

Logistically, I have each character’s entire show tracked on a single page on my iPad for reference— entrances, exits, when/where they move, diagrams showing traffic patterns with other actors, costume changes, key moments that need to be specific for technical cues. Twice a month, the understudies run the whole show onstage to keep all our characters fresh.

Q: Any experiences from your own school years that helped shape your take on any of these roles?

A: MLB: The characters Evan, Jared and Connor are very relatable. They all feel alone in their own way, and are searching for connection. We all know what it feels like to be alone at one time or another. I remember how hard it was going to a new high school and not knowing anyone. I felt isolated, thinking I was the only one feeling this way. Eventually I realized I was far from the only one going through this, enabling me to open up to the new experience and go on to make great friendships and relationships. Additionally, growing up with social media can be stressful, and ironically makes us feel more alone than ever before. Honest communication is key, and I always strive to bring honesty and truth to these characters at every performance. The characters, the show, and the topics discussed deserve to be truly seen and heard, just as we all do.

A: SCA: I think school is hard for everyone at times. If you’re exempt from that statement, I salute you and encourage you to look out for the little guy. In college I ran into someone who bullied me in elementary school. I thought, hmm, maybe he’ll finally apologize. What he said was, “Oh man, you were horrible to me back then.” Me?! We both thought the other one was the bully. Kids can be terrible to each other, but it’s often just because they don’t understand that everyone is having an equally difficult time navigating it all. Just a reminder that every character (and person) has their own story and deserves all the empathy and understanding you can offer.

Q: How do you spend your backstage time during shows when you’re not performing?

A: MLB: This changes every week. In the beginning while I was still learning, I watched every show (over 300), and then that transitioned into running the material backstage along with the show. I spend more time going over Connor and Jared material because I don’t play them every week.

A: SCA: As an understudy backstage, it’s up to us to manage our time. We have to keep in touch with what’s happening onstage, as scenes do grow and evolve, and you don’t want to be surprised by that when you go on. Sometimes, the understudies get together in one dressing room for a speed-through of the lines, so that we don’t have to worry about the words when we step into a scene. We also have lots of downtime to read, write, watch TV, play video games, exercise, etc. Right now, I’m knitting a blanket. It’s really special that we all get along and enjoy our time backstage together, because that environment does improve our work.

Q: What shows or artists had a particular impact on you growing up?

A: MLB: The shows that had a great impact on me are Rent, Next to Normal, Pippin, and The Phantom of the Opera. Phantom was the first show I ever saw, and it helped inspire me to want to pursue theatre. When I discovered shows like Rent, they sparked my interest in contemporary-style theatre. I always enjoyed pop/rock music, listening to artists like the Goo Goo Dolls, which contributed to my songwriting and the type of music I enjoy performing.

A: SCA: My uncle passed away when I was a teenager, and I had a very hard time processing. I went numb, just emotionally shut off. It wasn’t until a few years later, watching Floyd Collins, that the dam finally broke. The show reflected my family, our loss, our grief, and then it offered hope. It created an opportunity for me to move through the pain I’d bottled up and let it go. Looking back, I would venture to say that single play changed the course of my emotional well-being. I’m still thankful for that night, and thankful to be giving back.
CONSIDER MUSIC

In Dear Evan Hansen, Evan — with the help of his friend Jared — “reinvents” Connor through a series of fictitious emails detailing their “friendship.” Through this imagined friendship, Evan also begins to reinvent himself. Together in “Sincerely Me” they sing:

“CAUSE ALL THAT IT TAKES IS A LITTLE REINVENTION
IT’S EASY TO CHANGE IF YOU GIVE IT YOUR ATTENTION
ALL YOU GOTTA DO
IS JUST BELIEVE YOU CAN BE WHO YOU WANNA BE
SINCERELY, ME”

DISCUSS:
Do you think it is possible to “reinvent” yourself — either how you perceive yourself or how others perceive you? How can believing in yourself help to shape your personal narrative?

MUSIC
Reinvention: Shaping your own personal narrative

In Dear Evan Hansen, Evan — with the help of his friend Jared — “reinvents” Connor through a series of fictitious emails detailing their “friendship.” Through this imagined friendship, Evan also begins to reinvent himself. Together in “Sincerely Me” they sing:

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IS JUST BELIEVE YOU CAN BE WHO YOU WANNA BE
SINCERELY, ME”

DISCUSS:
Do you think it is possible to “reinvent” yourself — either how you perceive yourself or how others perceive you? How can believing in yourself help to shape your personal narrative?
THE DIGITAL EFFECT

Social Media: Catalyst and Accelerator
It happens every day in our modern world. We post a photo, a video, or a “newsworthy” event to Facebook, Instagram or Twitter and within seconds the “likes” come pouring in, followed by dozens of comments and countless re-tweets and shares. Within minutes these numbers can multiply and within hours they can explode. Before we know it, that story is trending.

The speed at which information can spread over the Internet is undeniable.

WRITE: Write an essay discussing the positive and negative implications of this catalytic impact. How can social media be used to control the flow of information/mobilize events/shape perceptions and alternatively how can it spin out of control — taking on a life of its own? Draw from examples in Dear Evan Hansen, your daily life, and the world at large.

Your online self: Is it the real you?
Some might say that social media sites offer them a place to share more of themselves than they might feel comfortable sharing in real life (IRL). Others might feel pressure to curate the most perfect version of themselves since it’s so publicly on display.

DISCUSS: How do you feel? Is the persona you project through social media the real you? Why or why not? Do you behave differently on different forms of social media? Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram — and how about on your Finsta account?

Reflected Essay: A Message From Aliza Weinberger, Audience Development Manager

There’s a moment near the beginning of Dear Evan Hansen when Alana reprises a few lines of “Waving Through a Window,” tapping on the screen of her phone. The first time I saw the show, I immediately fell in love with that song. But seeing Alana’s moment hit me hard. I’ve often been that person staring into my phone or my laptop screen, wondering if anyone is listening and convinced no one is. That’s why I, like so many others, obsess over the number of likes I get on any given post. That social media engagement validation is quantifiable, immediate, and compelling.

It’s even harder to ignore since getting online engagement is now my job. I’m a digital content marketer, a job that didn’t exist when I was in high school, and I’ve been trained to know all the ways to get as many likes online as possible. Because of that, I know how arbitrary those likes can be. And just like Evan’s viral speech, what goes online is rarely the full story.

The Internet is a complex place. Terrible things can happen there, like bullying, no privacy, and miscommunication. You can waste so much time scrolling through other people’s Instagram photos or swiping through Snapchat stories and imagining their lives are better than yours. But the Internet is also pretty amazing. I wouldn’t work with it otherwise. You can connect with people around the world, finding new friends you’d never have met. You can learn almost anything, and you can never really be bored. It can be a real force for good, when channeled the right way. The fans who contributed to #YouWillBeFound are proof of that.

Spending my work days glued to my screens has made me take a hard look at how social media impacts my life, the good and the bad. People talk about not wanting to bring their work home, but I always seem to have my personal accounts open when I’m out with friends or see something Instagram-worthy while out and about. Unplugging is hard, but it’s a good idea. Taking the time to breathe and reevaluate, to remember what you love about your social media and what you want to come back to, is a great idea. Evan would take a break to hang around some trees, whereas I prefer taking walks around New York or reading a book. No matter what you do, screen-free time doesn’t need to be a punishment or a chore.

The Internet, and social media, is a tool; it’s not good or bad. But what you do there can be either. It helps to take a step back and see. Stop waving through that window and stop to decide if you really wanted that view in the first place.

For Common Core State Standards see page 33.
What role do the songs play in a musical?

Songs have a dramatic function that are an integral part of the storytelling: They help to develop character and/or move the action of the plot forward.

In musicals, it is a general rule that characters break into song when the emotional stakes have become so high that ordinary speech fails them. Through their songs, the characters can reveal their innermost thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams, grapple with difficult decisions, and come to important realizations about themselves.

Musical theater lyrics use many poetic devises, including rhythm, rhyme, repetition, figurative language, symbolism, and metaphor.

**LYRIC ANALYSIS**

**WRITE:** Read the lyrics of “Waving Through a Window.” Write an essay exploring how Pasek and Paul use figurative language to reinforce the isolation and insecurity that Evan feels at the beginning of the musical.

**WAVING THROUGH A WINDOW**

I’VE LEARNED TO SLAM ON THE BRAKE  
BEFORE I EVEN TURN THE KEY  
BEFORE I MAKE THE MISTAKE  
BEFORE I LEAD WITH THE WORST OF ME

GIVE THEM NO REASON TO STARE  
NO SLIPPIN’ UP IF YOU SLIP AWAY  
SO I GO NOTHIN’ TO SHARE  
NO, I GOT NOTHIN’ TO SAY

STEP OUT, STEP OUTTA THE SUN  
IF YOU KEEP GETTIN’ BURNED  
STEP OUT, STEP OUTTA THE SUN  
BECAUSE YOU’VE LEARNED, BECAUSE YOU’VE LEARNED

ON THE OUTSIDE ALWAYS LOOKIN’ IN  
WILL I EVER BE MORE THAN I’VE ALWAYS BEEN?  
’CAUSE I’M TAP-TAP-TAPPIN’ ON THE GLASS  
WAVING THROUGH A WINDOW

I TRY TO SPEAK BUT NOBODY CAN HEAR  
SO I WAIT AROUND FOR AN ANSWER TO APPEAR  
WHILE I’M WATCH-WATCH-WATCHIN’ PEOPLE PASS  
WAVING THROUGH A WINDOW  
OH  
CAN ANYBODY SEE?  
IS ANYBODY WAVIN’...

WHEN YOU’RE FALLIN’ IN A FOREST  
AND THERE’S NOBODY AROUND  
DO YOU EVER REALLY CRASH  
OR EVEN MAKE A SOUND? (4X)

DID I EVEN MAKE A SOUND?  
DID I EVEN MAKE A SOUND?  
IT’S LIKE I NEVER MADE A SOUND  
WILL I EVER MAKE A SOUND?

ON THE OUTSIDE ALWAYS LOOKIN’ IN  
WILL I EVER BE MORE THAN I’VE ALWAYS BEEN?  
’CAUSE I’M TAP-TAP-TAPPIN’ ON THE GLASS  
WAVING THROUGH A WINDOW

I TRY TO SPEAK BUT NOBODY CAN HEAR  
SO I WAIT AROUND FOR AN ANSWER TO APPEAR  
WHILE I’M WATCH-WATCH-WATCHIN’ PEOPLE PASS  
WAVING THROUGH A WINDOW  
OH  
CAN ANYBODY SEE?  
IS ANYBODY WAVIN’ BACK AT ME?

WE START WITH STARS IN OUR EYES  
WE START BELIEVIN’ THAT WE BELONG  
BUT EV’RY SUN DOESN’T RISE  
AND NO ONE TELLS YOU WHERE YOU WENT WRONG

STEP OUT, STEP OUTTA THE SUN  
IF YOU KEEP GETTIN’ BURNED  
STEP OUT, STEP OUTTA THE SUN  
BECAUSE YOU’VE LEARNED, BECAUSE YOU’VE LEARNED

OH  
OH  
OH  
OH
WRITE: Examine the first stanza/chorus of “You Will Be Found,” the finale to Act 1, and compare the lyrics to those in “Waving Through a Window.” Has Evan changed? If so, how? How do Pasek and Paul use the continuity of metaphors and symbolism to show Evan’s emotional journey throughout the first act of the musical? Consider the audiences of each song — to whom is Evan singing?

YOU WILL BE FOUND
(First stanza and chorus)

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE NOBODY WAS THERE?
HAVE YOU EVER FELT FORGOTTEN IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE?
HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOU COULD DISAPPEAR?
LIKE YOU COULD FALL, AND NO ONE WOULD HEAR

SO MAYBE LET THAT FEELING WASH AWAY
MAYBE THERE’S A REASON TO BELIEVE YOU’LL BE OK
‘CAUSE WHEN YOU DON’T FEEL STRONG ENOUGH TO STAND
YOU CAN REACH, REACH OUT YOUR HAND

OH, SOMEONE WILL COME RUNNIN’
AND I KNOW THEY’LL TAKE YOU HOME

EVEN WHEN THE DARK COMES CRASHIN’ THROUGH
WHEN YOU NEED A FRIEND TO CARRY YOU
AND WHEN YOU’RE BROKEN ON THE GROUND
SO LET THE SUN COME STREAMIN’ IN
‘CAUSE YOU’LL REACH UP AND YOU’LL RISE AGAIN
LIFT YOUR HEAD AND LOOK AROUND
YOU WILL BE FOUND

YOU WILL BE FOUND
YOU WILL BE FOUND
YOU WILL BE FOUND
YOU WILL BE FOUND
YOU WILL BE FOUND
YOU WILL BE FOUND

Andrew Feldman as Evan Hansen (Broadway Company).
Scene begins

Evan, alone.

EVAN
I’m not doing this. I’m done.

CONNOR
You can’t just stop now.

And Connor is there.

EVAN
I don’t think I can live with this anymore.

CONNOR
What about my parents?

EVAN
No more emails.

CONNOR
How can you do this to them?

EVAN
No more Connor Project. No more orchard.

CONNOR
After everything they’ve done for you? They need you.

EVAN
Need me for what? To keep lying to them?

CONNOR
That lie is the only thing that’s keeping them together.

EVAN
That’s not true.

CONNOR
Oh really? They seemed like a pretty happy family when you met them?

EVAN
I don’t want to lie anymore.

CONNOR
And what about Zoe?

EVAN
Zoe said, she just … she wants me.

CONNOR
Right.

EVAN
She likes me for who I am.

CONNOR
Except you didn’t happen to mention that everything you’ve told her, it’s all been one big fucking lie, did you?

Evan says nothing.

Oh. You left that part out.

EVAN
So then, what if … what if I did tell her the truth?

CONNOR
She’ll hate you.

EVAN
Maybe she would understand. Maybe everyone would understand.

CONNOR
Everyone will hate you.
EVAN
Not if I can just, if I can explain it, you know?

CONNOR
You’ll go right back to where you started. No friends.

EVAN
I want to be done/ with this.

CONNOR

EVAN
I’m ready to be done with it.

CONNOR
If you really believe that, then why are you standing here, talking to yourself? Again?

Beat.

CONNOR (cont’d)
You think you’re going to turn around all of a sudden and start telling everyone the truth?
You can’t even tell yourself the truth.

EVAN
What are you talking about?

CONNOR
How did you break your arm?

A pall comes over Evan.

How did you break your arm, Evan?

EVAN
I fell.

CONNOR
Really? Is that what happened?

EVAN (less and less confident)
I was, I lost my grip and I … I fell.

CONNOR
Did you fall? Or did you let go?

Beat. MUSIC IN.

You can get rid of me whenever you want. You can get rid of all of it. The Connor Project.
The orchard. But then all that you’re going to be left with is … you.

For Forever (Reprise)

CONNOR
END OF MAY OR EARLY JUNE
THIS PICTURE PERFECT AFTERNOON
WE SHARE.
DRIVE THE WINDING COUNTRY ROAD
GRAB A SCOOP AT “A LA MODE”
AND THEN WE’RE THERE …

CONNOR
Think about it.

Evan stands there for a moment, lost.
He makes a decision.
Lights shift and Evan and Alana are in their bedrooms, online.
Connor is gone.
TAKE ACTION

In *Dear Evan Hansen*, Evan, Alana and Jared become activists, developing a campaign to raise awareness about suicide and promote suicide prevention within their school and community. Some of the actions they take include:

- Creating and displaying awareness posters at school
- Selling awareness-raising buttons
- Developing a social media campaign
- Speaking at a student assembly
- Launching a Kickstarter fundraising campaign

DISCUSS: Together as a class, discuss some of the ways in which they take action. Now discuss what causes are important to you. Do you unite behind a single cause or are there many individual interests? What are some of the actions you can take to be a changemaker around an issue that is important to you?

CREATE: Think specifically about an issue that is important to you and develop a plan of action. What campaign would you propose to raise awareness? How might you volunteer your time? What might you be able do on a personal one-to-one level? How will you engage other friends and members of your community?

MAKING ART ABOUT ART

Artists take inspiration from all of their life experiences, including other art forms.

*Dear Evan Hansen* has inspired a tremendous outpouring of artwork originating from fans, audience members, and student artists participating in the show’s educational programs – including ArtsConnection’s Art2Art initiative in New York City.

CREATE: How do the music, story, and emotions of *Dear Evan Hansen* inspire you artistically? Using any medium you like, create a piece of art that captures the most memorable moment of the play for you. Will you draw, paint, sculpt, make a collage or a film, write a song….?

We hope you will share your creations with us! If you feel so inspired, please tag us @dearevanhansen #dearevanhansen

See more at dearevanhansenofficial.tumblr.com or Art2Art.DearEvanHansen.com For Common Core State Standards see page 33.
Q: How did you first become aware of Dear Evan Hansen?

A: I first became aware of Dear Evan Hansen when it was playing Off-Broadway. I love the theater. I studied theater performance in college, so I try to stay in the loop of what’s on stage. At that time, I was working on Post It Forward, which is a program I had developed and launched at Tumblr that touches on a few of the themes in Dear Evan Hansen. It just so happens that the PR agency I was working with was also working on Dear Evan Hansen. They said, “This show and Post It Forward are spiritual soul mates. You have to see it.” So I went to see it and was completely wowed and amazed by how beautiful it was and how much it resonated with me personally because of its themes, which are important to me in both my life and my work.

That same PR agency was kind enough to set up meeting for me with Stacey Mindich, the producer of Dear Evan Hansen. So I went over to her office and had an awesome chat about the show and what I was working on and social media and social media for Dear Evan Hansen and how they could be tapping into that community. At the end of that amazing meeting, she said, “You know we have this Digital Board if you want to think about being a part of it.” She probably hadn’t even finished the sentence before I was like, “Oh, my god, yes!” It really is for me so funny because it’s so many of the interests that I’ve had in my life for a long time: theater and connection over social media and themes of mental health awareness, and they all converged into one. So I get to play a tiny, tiny little part in the story of this production and that’s really exciting for me.

Q: Can you tell me a bit more about Post It Forward? What is it exactly?

A: Post It Forward is a community hub on Tumblr that was created to give a safe space for conversation sharing around a myriad of issues that fall under what we call mental and emotional well-being. So this can be anything on the spectrum that someone could be dealing with, whether it is bullying or self-harm or eating disorders or LGBT issues. There is a lot happening in young people’s lives and we really just wanted to create a place where people could talk and share and find community and support each other around these issues.

Q: How did it start? What was the impetus for Post It Forward?

A: It’s something that we’ve been thinking about for a few years and I think we’ve been taking small steps toward figuring out how to best help support this community.

For many years, Tumblr as a platform has done a lot to try to help catch people at moments of intervention. We’ve tested out putting PSAs on the site so that if you are searching for a particular term that falls into this spectrum, a PSA pops up that says, “Hey. Is everything OK? How can we help you?” and directs you to helplines such as the Crisis Text Line or to a center where you can actually find the support that you need. But we felt that we could do more. We kept feeling like we shouldn’t only be talking about these issues of mental health in the aftermath of when something really scary has happened, when everybody is saying, “What could have been done?” Rather, we wanted to bring the conversation to the forefront — completely devoid of any tragedy — in the hopes that by talking about these issues and destigmatizing them little by little we can start to break down some of the shame people experience.

In addition, we have a lot of amazing content on Tumblr that is very supportive, including people sharing their personal experiences around mental illness. It is people, on their own, connecting with other people — sometimes in the same state or sometimes a different country — going that extra step of saying, “Hey, I’ve been there. I can help you. Let’s share our stories together.” We also have a lot of amazing resources on Tumblr in regards to nonprofits who are using the platform in a similar way. So part of creating Post It Forward was realizing that there was all this amazing stuff organically happening, and that we needed to gather it into a hub and put it in one place where we could really amplify the voices of our community. So that’s what we built Post It Forward to achieve. To bring together our experts in the community, our amazing users who are already doing this great work, our celebrity partners, who have their own stories to tell and to open it up to say “Hey, this is a safe space to share.” And more importantly, to bring home the idea that by sharing your experience, and what you’ve been through, you might be helping somebody else.

The response has been so positive and so overwhelming. I’ve had the opportunity of meeting many, many of our users who have become Post It Forward superstars and have gone above and beyond to reach out to other people. They create their own original content and come into our office for our mental health seminars and get certified to become Crisis Text Line Ambassadors. They have really just taken this beyond our wildest expectations and it’s so awesome to see them doing that in service of other people who, like them, are maybe just going through a hard time.

Q: What advice would you give to young people who want to become activists in this kind of way — whether it is around this issue or another issue that might be important to them — and how might they be able to use the Internet as a platform to create change?

A: I can’t understate enough the power of your own voice and your own story. Whether it is on social media and the Internet or whether it is in the halls of your school. Your story and your perspective — whether you’ve been through a certain experience or whether you just have seen something that you feel you want to speak out on. I’ve seen firsthand the power of sharing your personal story and how that can impact someone. Every voice matters. No one person is too small. Use whatever tools you have at your disposal to make yourself heard. There’s real power in it!
THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

At the beginning of the show, Evan has an assignment: to write an inspirational letter to himself.

“Dear Evan Hansen,
Today is going to be a great day and here’s why …”

Much has been written about the power of positive thinking, the benefits of an optimistic outlook, and the value of self pep talks. Together these techniques can:

• Relieve stress and anxiety
• Reshape attitudes
• Increase self-esteem
• Influence behavior
• Impact goal achievement
• Improve overall health

WRITE: Write an inspirational letter to yourself.

Dear me,
“This is going to be a great [day/week/year] and here’s why …”

What are you most looking forward to? What, if anything, do you hope to achieve? What are the challenges you might face? How will you work to overcome those hurdles?

LITERARY COMPARISONS

OUTSIDERS

Literature, both classic and contemporary, is filled with “outsiders” — characters who, like Evan, feel isolated and struggle to connect. Although each character has his/her own unique backstory and challenges, one can find commonalities between them.

WRITE: Choose an “outsider” from another book you have read or are currently reading. Write a comparative essay showing the similarities and differences between that character and Evan. How do their emotions/choices/journeys parallel one another and where do they diverge? What impact does each have on other characters in their respective stories?

Some suggested character comparisons.

• Laura from The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams
• Holden Caulfield from Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
• Charlie from The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
• Christopher from The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon
• Oscar from The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz
• Eleanor from Eleanor and Park by Rainbow Rowell
• Aza Holmes in Turtles All the Way Down by John Green
• Greg Gaines from Me and Earl and the Dying Girl by Jesse Andrews

FLAWED HERO/DECEPTION

Evan is a flawed hero. As a class, discuss the characteristics of a flawed hero. How does the presence of a flawed hero serve the overall storytelling of a fictional work? Why is it important for protagonists to have character flaws? How do authors go about creating protagonists who are likable despite their flaws?

Many times, flawed heroes — like Evan — lie to gain status with others and/or a sense of belonging. Sometimes these lies stem from uncorrected misconceptions or omissions of the truth and grow into greater deceptions. This convention appears not only in literature but also many modern-day films.

WRITE: Choose a book/movie you have recently read/seen in which lying/deception is a central theme. Compare it to Dear Evan Hansen. How does the lie begin? What are the character’s motives and what are results?

Some suggested character comparisons.

• Gatsby from The Great Gatsby
• Tom from The Talented Mr. Ripley
• Huck from The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
• Olive from Easy A

For Common Core State Standards see page 33.
In *Dear Evan Hansen*, the title character struggles with social interaction and maintaining relationships, isolates himself, and fears being judged by others. Although Evan’s specific problem is not named in the play, these are classic signs of social anxiety disorder, a mental health disorder that affects many young people, usually beginning during the early teen years.

Also in the play, the character Connor Murphy takes his own life. Before his suicide, he is depicted as angry, oppositional, and isolated, which may be seen in young people struggling with depression. Self-harm, suicide attempts, and completed suicide are also strongly linked to adolescent mood disorders such as depression.

### WHAT IS SOCIAL ANXIETY?

In the teen years, young people start being more aware of what other people think. There are "right" things to wear, or say, or do — and things that teens shouldn’t do that could be embarrassing or weird. Some feel so worried about what others are thinking about them that it starts to impact negatively on their everyday lives. This kind of worry is called social anxiety disorder.

Kids with social anxiety disorder aren’t just nervous when they are at parties or giving a speech in class. Even answering a question in class can feel extremely scary; some kids worry they will humiliate themselves simply by eating in the school cafeteria or walking into a room. That’s because kids with social anxiety fear they might do something embarrassing or offensive, and it will make others judge or reject them.

### WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

A young person with depression experiences persistent, intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and irritability that make it hard to function day to day. We don’t know exactly how or why depression develops, but it’s not usually caused by bad things happening.

Depression is called an “internalizing disorder,” which means that it primarily affects a young person’s emotional life rather than their behavior. Because of this, it can take a while for others to recognize it — or for a young person to realize that his/her thinking, and emotional responses, is troubled. Adolescent depression is more common than some people think. According to some statistics, more than 12 percent of teens ages 15 and 16 struggle with depression. For teens ages 17 and 18 it jumps to more than 15 percent.

### HOW CAN TEENS GET HELP IF THEY ARE ANXIOUS OR DEPRESSED?

Teens who think they need help with an emotional or mental health issue might not know how to ask for help. If they are very anxious, it might be embarrassing for them to admit that things that seem easy for other people are very hard for them. If they are depressed, they may worry that others won’t understand and will tell them to “snap out of it” — or that family and friends will be disappointed.

But parents, teachers, and friends can be more sympathetic and less judgmental than teens imagine. First, however, they need to know how a young person is feeling. The sooner a teen asks for help, the sooner they will start feeling better.

### UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ANXIETY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persistent sadness or irritability</td>
<td>Intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and irritability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling worthless, or hopeless about the future</td>
<td>Low self-esteem and a sense of worthlessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminished interest in most activities, especially things they used to enjoy</td>
<td>Lack of interest in activities they once enjoyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in eating or sleeping patterns</td>
<td>Changes in eating and sleeping habits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low energy and motivation</td>
<td>Low energy levels and difficulty in concentrating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in academic performance</td>
<td>Decline in academic performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased ability to think or concentrate</td>
<td>Difficulty in thinking and concentrating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about suicide or death</td>
<td>Thoughts about suicide or death.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Child Mind Institute is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Their teams work every day to deliver the highest standards of care, advance the science of the developing brain, and empower parents, professionals, and policymakers to support children when and where they need it most.

The Child Mind Institute is dedicated to helping children reach their full potential in school and in life and is driven to create a brighter future for children through the following three commitments:

- Give children access to the best, most effective treatments
- Advance the science of the developing brain to improve diagnosis
- Provide information that empowers families and communities to get help

The organization does not accept funding from the pharmaceutical industry. All resources are free.

Connect with Child Mind Institute:
facebook: ChildMindInstitute
twitter: ChildMindDotOrg
linkedin: company/Child-Mind-Institute

crisistextline.org

When a young woman texted DoSomething.org with a heartbreaking cry for help, the organization responded by opening a nationwide Crisis Text Line for people in pain. Nearly 29 million text messages later, the organization is using the privacy and power of text messaging to help people handle addiction, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, sexual abuse, and more. But there’s an even bigger win:

The anonymous data collected by text is teaching us when crises are most likely to happen — and helping schools and law enforcement to prepare for them.

Text the Crisis Text Line at 741-741.

thejedfoundation.org

JED is a nonprofit that exists to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for our nation’s teens and young adults. JED partners with high schools and colleges to strengthen their mental health, substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention programs and systems; equips teens and young adults with the skills and knowledge to help themselves and each other; and encourages community awareness, understanding, and action for young adult mental health.

Learn more about JED programs: JED Campus (jedcampus.org), ULifeline (ulifeline.org), Half of Us (halfofus.com), Love Is Louder (loveislouder.com) and Set to Go (setto.go.org).

Connect with JED:
Email: jedfoundation.org/email
facebook: jedfoundation
twitter: @jedfoundation
linkedin: company/the-jed-foundation

thetrevorproject.org

Founded in 1998 by the creators of the Academy Award®–winning short film Trevor, The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13 to 24. Every day, The Trevor Project saves young lives through its accredited, free, and confidential phone, instant message, and text messaging crisis intervention services. A leader and innovator in suicide prevention, The Trevor Project offers the largest safe social networking community for LGBTQ youth, best practice suicide prevention, educational trainings, resources for youth and adults, and advocacy initiatives.

Connect with The Trevor Project:
facebook: TheTrevorProject
twitter: @trevorproject

bornthisway.foundation

Led by Lady Gaga and her mother, Cynthia Germanotta, Born This Way Foundation was founded in 2012 to support the wellness of young people and empower them to create a kinder and braver world. To achieve these goals, Born This Way Foundation leverages rigorous academic research and authentic partnerships in order to provide young people with kinder communities, improved mental health resources, and more positive environments — online and offline.

Connect with Born This Way Foundation:
facebook: bornthiswayfoundation
twitter: @BTWFoundation

HOTLINES FOR HELP

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, don’t wait—

- Tell a trusted adult (parent, teacher, school nurse, coach, pediatrician, etc.)
- Call an anonymous hotline
  - The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)
  - The Trevor Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386
  - 1.800.LIFENET (543-3638)
- Text the Crisis Text Line at 741-741
HELP A FRIEND IN NEED

HERE ARE POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS ON SOCIAL MEDIA THAT A FRIEND MIGHT BE IN EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AND NEED YOUR HELP, FROM THE JED FOUNDATION (JED), A NONPROFIT THAT EXISTS TO PROTECT EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND PREVENT SUICIDE FOR OUR NATION'S TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS.

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

If you see someone posting distressing content on social media, or if they are behaving dramatically differently than usual, it may signal that this person needs help. If you have a gut feeling that something is not right, you should act on it.

Be aware of statuses/posts, messages, photos, videos, links, comments, or hashtags that include the following themes:

- Feeling alone, hopeless, isolated, useless, or a burden to others: “I feel like I’m in a black hole”; “I don’t want to get out of bed...ever”; “Leave me alone”; “I can’t do anything”

- Showing irritability and hostility that is out of character: “I hate everyone”; “F*%K the world”

- Showing impulsive behaviors: such as driving recklessly, a significant change in, and especially increase in, substance use, or taking other risks

- Insomnia posts: “3am again and no sleep”

- Withdrawal from everyday activities: “Missed another chem lab — I’m such a waste”; “Another day in bed under the covers”

- Use of concerning hashtags: #depressed #lonely #whenimgone #noonecares #suicidal #selfharm #hatemyself #alone #sad #lost #worthless #neverenough #givingup

Currently, when someone searches for a hashtag indicative of self-harm (for example, “#cutting”) on Instagram, a content advisory warning pop-up will appear. People have the option to select “Learn More” before viewing any posts.

- Following activity: On either Facebook’s News Feed, or Instagram’s Following Activity, you can see the accounts and posts people start to follow. If you notice a friend liking or following feeds or posts that promote negative behaviors, even if they aren’t sharing concerning content themselves, that may serve as a warning sign that they are engaging with troubling messages or communities.

- Trust your instincts: If you see someone posting messages, photos, videos, links, comments, or hashtags that suggest the person is in emotional distress, you should reach out and get them the help they may need.

I can’t handle any of this 😞
HOW TO HELP A FRIEND IN NEED

If you have a friend who seems to be struggling with an issue that may be more serious than they can handle, there is a lot that you can do to support them.

Reach out — pick up the phone, swing by their place, walk with them to do errands, let them know they are not alone in feeling this way and that it's OK to ask for help. Be clear and direct, and do not use hints such as liking a post or replying with an emoticon, as these could be misinterpreted by the person you're trying to help.

Understanding that it can be tough to start this conversation, here are some suggestions on how you can reach out:

– “I’m worried about you because you seem…” (e.g., sad, withdrawn, etc.).
– Have examples ready such as, “It concerned me when you said…” Be specific about what you noticed.
– “Do you want to talk about it?”; “What can I do to help?”
– If they say no, then you might say: “It’s OK if you don’t want to talk to me, but it is important that you talk to someone.”
– Offer to help them connect with support.

NEVER BE AFRAID TO GIVE YOUR FRIEND A CALL, PAY A VISIT, OR SEND THEM A FACEBOOK MESSAGE TO LET THEM KNOW YOU ARE CONCERNED, AND OFFER TO HELP CONNECT THEM WITH ANY EXTRA SUPPORT NEEDED.

WARNING SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MAY NEED URGENT HELP OR MAY BE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

While it can be hard, particularly on social media, to know if someone is exaggerating, being sarcastic or being serious, if someone threatens to take their own life, you should always take them seriously.

Here are some examples of things someone at risk of suicide might post about:

• Suicide or wanting to die: “I want out”; “Everyone would be better off without me”; “No one would care if I were gone”; “There’s no reason to live”

• Intense and urgent emotional despair or intense guilt or shame, feeling trapped: “I can’t take it [the pain] anymore”; “There is no way out”; “I’m done”; “I’m so sorry for all the trouble I’ve caused everyone”

• Rage or seeking revenge: “I’ll show you all”; “She’ll be sorry”

• Saying goodbyes, giving away personal possessions: “I’ll miss you all”; “You won’t have to worry about me anymore”

• Glorifying or glamorizing death, or making death seem heroic: “Death is beautiful”

• Where/how to get potentially lethal means, like access to pills or weapons
HOW TO HELP A FRIEND IN URGENT NEED OR WHO MAY BE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

1. If someone is threatening their own life or someone else’s life, this is an emergency. If you feel comfortable, you should bring your friend to the emergency room. Or you call 911 or campus emergency services immediately. If it’s safe to do so, stay with that person or do what you can to contact them or find someone to stay with them until help arrives.

2. You can use the following free, 24/7 national services any time:
   Crisis Text Line: Text “START” to 741-741 or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

REMEMBER TO:
• Listen without judgment, assumptions, or interruptions. Let them know that you believe what they are saying and take them seriously
• Know your limits and do not place yourself in physical danger — the best way to help is to connect your friend to a mental health professional.

NO MATTER WHAT, YOU SHOULDN’T BE EMBARRASSED OR WORRIED ABOUT OFFENDING OR UPSETTING YOUR FRIEND. HELPING YOUR FRIEND MAY TAKE SOME COURAGE, BUT IT IS ALWAYS WORTH THE EFFORT TO SUPPORT THEIR HEALTH AND SAFETY.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

jedfoundation.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND HOW TO HELP YOURSELF OR A FRIEND, VISIT:

www.jedfoundation.org

This guide, while evidence based, is for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended to constitute medical advice or be a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.
RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS & PARENTS

FOR ADDITIONAL READING AND REFERENCES ON SOME OF THE TOPICAL ISSUES RAISED IN DEAR EVAN HANSEN, PLEASE VISIT THE FOLLOWING LINKS:


Christiane Noll as Cynthia Murphy and Jessica Phillips as Heidi Hansen (First National Tour).

McGrath, Keenan. “Your Facebook Life Doesn’t Fool Me.” scarymommy.com


Steingard, MD, Ron J. “What are the Symptoms of Depression in Teenagers?” Child Mind Institute. Childmind.org


As we expect more from technology, do we expect less from each other? Sherry Turkle studies how our devices and online personas are redefining human connection and communication — and asks us to think deeply about the new kinds of connection we want to have.

EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR LESSONS

WRITE TO INSPIRE: THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING (PG. 26)
Framework for 21st Century Learning: Life and Career Skills
• Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria
• Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressure
Framework for 21st Century Learning: Health
• Understanding preventive physical and mental health measures, including proper diet, nutrition, exercise, risk avoidance, and stress reduction

TAKE ACTION AND BE CREATIVE: MAKING ART ABOUT ART (PG. 24)
National Core Arts Standards
• VA:Cr1.2.Ia: Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.
• VA:Cr1.2.IIa: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.
• MU:Cr2.1.C.Ia: Assemble and organize sounds or short musical ideas to create initial expressions of selected experiences, moods, images, or story lines.
• MA:Cr2.1.I: Apply aesthetic criteria in developing, proposing, and refining artistic ideas, plans, prototypes, and production processes for media arts productions, considering original inspirations, goals, and presentation context.

REFLECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA: THE DIGITAL EFFECT (PG. 19)
Common Core State Standards
Grades 9-10:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Grades 11-12:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

COMPARE MUSIC AND LYRICS (PG. 20)
AND EXAMINE SONGS (PG. 21)
AND CONSIDER CHARACTER AND MUSIC: MUSIC (PG. 18)
Common Core State Standards
Grades 9-10:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Grades 11-12:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

DISCUSS SCENE DIALOGUE (PG. 22-23)
Common Core State Standards
Grades 9-10:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Grades 11-12:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

WRITE TO INSPIRE: LITERARY COMPARISONS (PG. 26)
Common Core State Standards
Grades 9-10:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Grades 11-12:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

TAKE ACTION AND BE CREATIVE: TAKE ACTION (PG. 24)
Framework for 21st Century Learning: Creativity and Innovation
• Use a wide range of idea creation techniques (such as brainstorming)
• Elaborate, refine, analyze, and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts
• Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur

Phoenix Best as Alana Beck (Broadway Company).