Case Study:

Enhancing Wellbeing and Learning with Technology: Coolum Beach Christian College's Journey.

> **Technology essentially is an amplifier that can certainly enhance teaching and learning. But if it's done poorly, it will do the opposite, and the student outcomes will deteriorate"**
>
> **Frances McLaren,**
> Digital Coach

Coolum Beach Christian College, located on the beautiful Sunshine Coast in Australia, stands out for its proactive approach to "digital safeguarding." At the heart of their approach is a deep commitment to prioritising student wellbeing, rooted in the school's motto, "Where Heart and Brain Matters," reflecting their Christian values.

This case study explores how the college navigated the challenges of digital integration, supported by Linewize, and forged a path toward nurturing responsible digital citizenship. It emphasises the importance of maintaining technology's rightful place within the broader educational framework while safeguarding students in an increasingly digital world.

Challenges: Increasingly distracted students

Like many schools, Coolum Beach Christian College wanted to address the issue of technology becoming a major distraction rather than a tool for improved learning. With technology playing a key role in enhancing teaching and learning, resulting in increased amounts of screen time and content available, students were more prone to lose focus and get off task.

The college understood that when used well, technology could enhance student outcomes, but when poorly implemented, it could hinder these outcomes.

So, their main goal was to make sure that the technology they provided improved the overall learning experience. This emphasised the need to not only provide devices but also to educate students on responsible and effective use of technology.

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Encouraging equity with one-to-one devices

An initial step towards managing digital learning pushed the school to move to a one-to-one device setup. It was essential for all students to have the same device to ensure everyone had equal access to the same tools and programs as well as the same safety measures.

The choice of devices was guided by the school's philosophy of empowering students to be producers of digital content rather than mere consumers.

For example, while the school acknowledges the utility of iPads, they've made a deliberate choice to exclude them as their primary learning device due to their observation that students often perceive iPads as primarily recreational and consumer devices.

One of the main reasons for us wanting school-provided devices was equity and knowing that we had equal protection. We had the ability to monitor all devices the same."

Frances McLaren,
Digital Coach

A comprehensive digital safeguarding strategy

Coolum Beach Christian College has developed a complete strategy that considers prevention, early intervention, and education in its commitment to nurturing students' holistic growth – whether online or offline. A central element of this strategy is a program that spans from kindergarten to Year 12, focusing on character development. Students delve into different character traits each month, with the aim of making these attributes applicable in both online and offline settings. The goal is to help students develop social skills and emotional intelligence that work everywhere, ensuring their wellbeing and overall growth in all parts of life.

On the technical front, the school took a step forward with Linewize solutions, starting with the implementation of education-specific filtering and reporting solutions. This initial step proved beneficial for the school as it enabled them to not only have a layer of online protection but also provide timely support by responding to red flag alerts.

This approach not only removed digital distractions and boosted student engagement but also fostered a collaborative approach to digital learning. It spurred discussions on safe online habits and responsible internet use.

The Linewize Journey

As technology rapidly advanced, accelerated by the impact of COVID, the school remained committed to keeping pace. Their digital safeguarding efforts became stronger with the introduction of new Linewize solutions like classroom internet management, real-time risk monitoring, and parental control apps. Implementing a digital safety and wellbeing ecosystem provided Coolum Beach with an indepth picture of student online behaviour and device use to ensure every student is guided towards effective use of technology.

The school now possesses the capability to actively monitor digital risks and online behaviours that may put students in harm's way. Staff also have real-time visibility and control over the internet in class and students' online activities, giving them greater confidence in the classroom. These solutions provide valuable insights and help identify instances of distraction. Here's how Coolum Beach Christian College uses Linewize's solutions to achieve a higher standard of digital safeguarding:

Detecting risks before they become incidents

With Linewize Monitor, the school can detect online issues before they escalate. The platform alerts the school of any concerning behaviours, online or "offline" and across all digital spaces, including social media, email and chat. Coolum Beach Christian College relies on the depth of data insight surfaced with Linewize Monitor. This data extends to specific groups, individual classes, and even individual students, enabling the school to utilise data for making data-informed decisions in their ongoing student support efforts.

The way the data is categorised is fairly clear. I love the fact that we can literally drill it down to a student and look for a pattern of behaviour."

Frances McLaren,
Digital Coach

Engaging parents and guardians

A particularly significant incident revolved around a student facing challenges with their mental health and overall wellbeing. Thanks to Linewize Monitor, the school received vital data that acted as an early warning signal. This allowed them to respond promptly, initiating a conversation with the student at the right time. Data has proven invaluable in the school's interactions with parents as well. Linewize Monitor offers contextual evidence of observed behaviours, supporting schools to have constructive, informed conversations.

"It's the Monitor data that I am always more interested in. Obviously, stop and block is essential because it protects our kids, but it's only a part of the story. (...) I'm drawn to Monitor because it gives us a much broader picture. With the alerts, we can see emerging trends and behaviours surfacing in areas where issues may be emerging. I feel like it enables us to be more proactive." - Frances McLaren, Digital Coach

While Coolum Beach's approach isn't overly rigid, they have a general framework. This framework guides the school on when and how to engage with parents or relevant authorities, **ensuring a systematic and well-considered response to alerts and issues as they arise.**

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Engaging and empowering the parent community with the Online Safety Hub

As the school attempted to extend the digital safeguarding umbrella to students' homes, they knew involving parents would be crucial. They also recognised that parents are time-poor and need more accessible and digestible information, so the school created a makeshift 'Digital Cafe' for parents on the school website, attempting to help parents in keeping them informed on what they need to know.

Implementing the Linewize Online Safety Hub took the Digital Cafe to the next level. With current, up-to-date information and a comprehensive resource library for parents and staff, the Hub marked a significant shift in engaging parents. Parents can also download and install the integrated parental control app should they decide to play a more active role and have greater visibility of what their children are up to online at home. It also helped facilitate workshops and, more importantly, fosters a stronger partnership between the school and parents.

"It's just this wealth of information for parents. It's easily accessible. It's very user-friendly. I love that you have experts speaking from different domains. You've got your psychologist and Cyber Safety experts. It's not an opinion piece. It's based on facts and evidence. I think that it's really important because there are lots of voices out there. It's nice for parents to be able to go, 'I can trust this voice here.' I love that it is always being kept current because, as you know when it comes to some of the more dangerous apps, it's changing rapidly." - Frances McLaren, Digital Coach

Tailoring filtering to school culture with Linewize School Manager

As a Christian school, the school recognised that it might hold stricter or different expectations in some areas - what searches are acceptable and which aren't. Linewize School Manager enabled the school to modify filtering settings to reflect these values, thus ensuring a secure and culturally appropriate digital environment.

The school's experience with Linewize School Manager highlighted the importance of having local control to suit the unique culture and expectations of the school community, such as language standards that were in harmony with the school's values.

Nurturing digital citizenship with Linewize Courses

The school places digital citizenship in high regard and believes it should not be an isolated aspect of education but rather an integral part of a student's educational journey. For the school, it forms the foundation upon which all other digital skills and knowledge are built.

The school chose to integrate Linewize Courses into its existing curriculum, an interactive and highly engaging online certificate course for students across Years 3-6. In primary, it was incorporated within relevant units. In secondary, the school has implemented it as part of its "Wise" program, which focuses on student wellbeing and social skills.

Alignment with leadership

The school strongly believes that strong leadership alignment with the school's philosophy drives digital transformation. A pivotal early step was defining their philosophy regarding technology in the classroom, a foundation that still shapes their decision-making across all educational aspects.

The school's philosophy revolves around two key pillars: prioritising student wellbeing and continually enhancing academic outcomes. This foundational approach serves as a guiding light when making decisions, such as embracing solutions like Linewize, which contribute to the betterment of student digital wellbeing, consequently improving academic outcomes. For instance, when selecting educational devices, they opt for ones supporting digital inking, as research shows its educational value. Despite the added expense, their commitment to empowering students to create digital content rather than just consume it remains strong.

"The stronger digital transformations happen when there's very strong alignment between leadership." - Frances McLaren, Digital Coach

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Advice for other schools

The Coolum Beach Christian College's advice for other schools is to adopt a strategic approach to technology integration. Frances highlights the significance of aligning technology usage with the school's mission and philosophy, emphasising that technology should bolster relationships, encourage responsible digital citizenship, and prioritise student wellbeing in all decision making processes.

It's really about your school examining its beliefs and mission statement. Where does technology fit into that? It's about relationships, and we don't want our technology to interfere with them. Therefore, we have tools in place to ensure that our students can still develop real-time relationships, engage in conversations, and learn how to interact socially with others, whether they are online or offline. That's our top priority, and technology should remain in its rightful place."

Frances McLaren,
Digital Coach

Impact

Coolum Beach Christian School sets a great example of how schools can use technology to protect and empower students in today's tech-driven world. Their journey shows us how important it is for schools to ensure technology aligns with their mission and values. They've prioritised student wellbeing and responsible digital behaviour, creating an environment where technology enhances rather than disrupts the school's commitment to providing a well-rounded education. Coolum Beach Christian College's approach can be an inspiration to other schools.

They focus on building strong relationships, encouraging real-time interactions, and ensuring that technology serves its proper role within education. This thoughtful and comprehensive approach to digital safeguarding is a valuable model. In a world where digital change is constant, their dedication to student wellbeing guides other schools in navigating the digital landscape while keeping the students' digital wellbeing and growth at the heart of their mission.

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About Linewize

Linewize create school communities that free our kids to get the best out of the digital world, while protecting them from harm. We empower school communities with the tools, expertise and support they need to ensure students are safe and prepared for their digital futures.

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