A Whole School Approach to Wellbeing
Guide for Schools

Contents

Introduction

Wellbeing combines physical, mental, emotional and social factors.

A whole school approach to wellbeing is more than just catering to the welfare needs of a few individual students; rather, it considers how to promote all students' social and emotional skills and healthy behaviours across the many dimensions of school life.

Benefits of a whole school wellbeing approach include[1]:

- Reduced disruptive behaviour incidents
- Higher levels of academic participation and engagement.
- Higher student retention
- Stronger social and emotional skills
- Improved academic results

Discussion about wellbeing in a school setting often refers only to certain aspects, such as mental health or social-emotional learning. We suggest a holistic view, inclusive of a range of wellbeing domains as outlined below, with the aim of creating an environment where students can be active and positive contributors to the school and society.

Research-backed questions and framework

Whole school wellbeing inventions must be evidence based, that is, tested with a randomised control trial, as opposed to simply informed by evidence.

While there are a number of high quality frameworks available, each school should assess them according to their results in the areas relevant to their particular circumstances[2].

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[1]Durlak et al. (2011)
[2]Runions et al (2021)

Supporting Frameworks and Domains

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Frameworks

The following are examples of frameworks that support the implementation of whole school wellbeing programs and all follow the same pattern of integrating core concepts across a range of settings including school, home and the wider community.
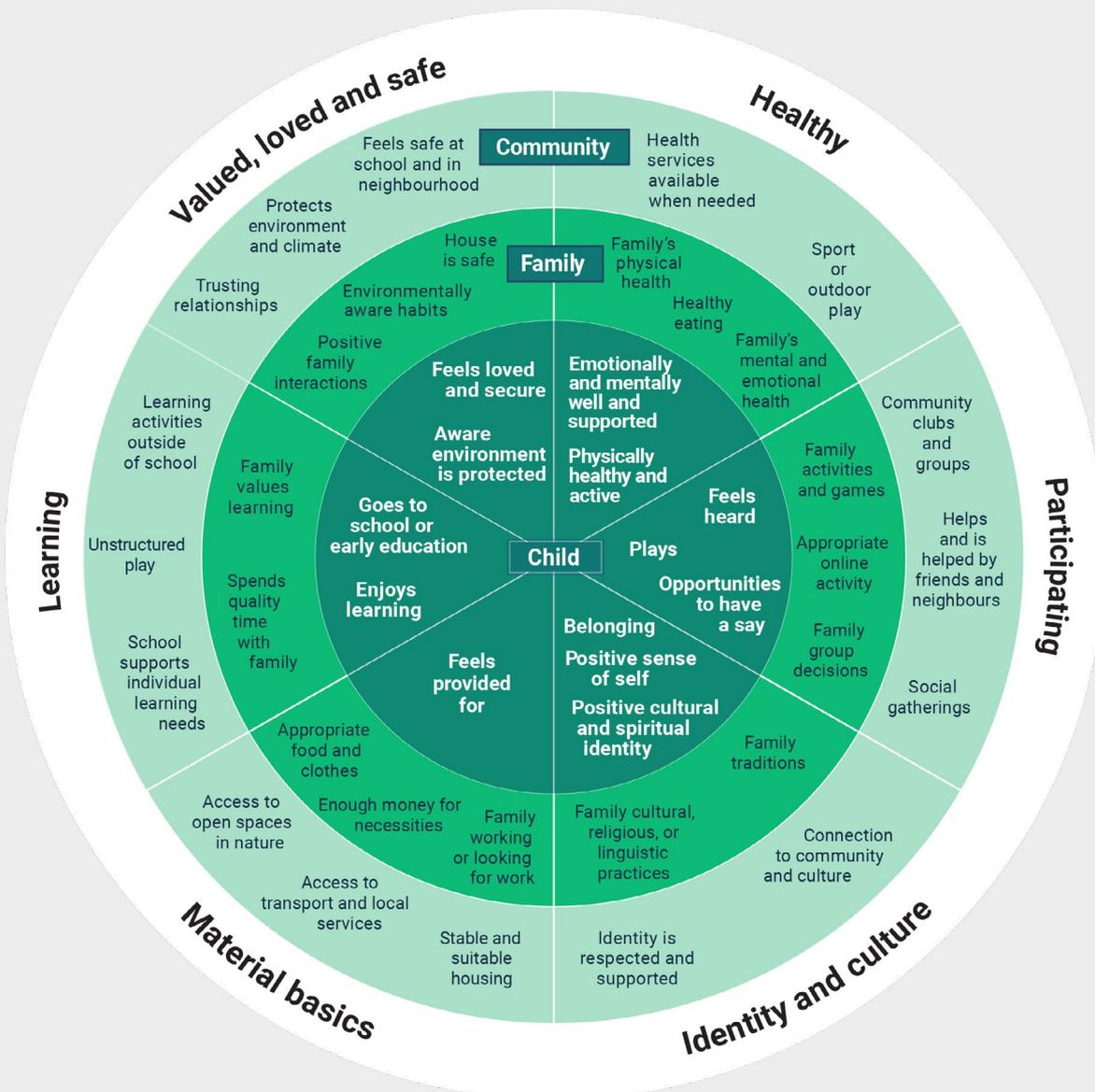
[3] Child and Youth Wellbeing
[4] Hauora

The Nest Framework

The Nest[5] is a wellbeing framework for children and young people developed by ARACY[6]. Wellbeing is viewed in terms of the various aspects of a child's overarching environment. To thrive, a young person must be adequately supported across all areas. The framework offers six interconnected domains that work together to support children to reach their full potential.

- **Valued, loved, and safe:** loving, trusting relationships.
- **Material basics:** housing, clothing, nutritious food, clean water and air.
- **Healthy:** physical, mental and emotional health needs met.

- **Learning:** individual needs are met through a variety of experiences.
- **Participating:** having a voice, being listened to and being taken seriously.
- **Positive sense of identity and culture:** feeling respected, valued, safe and supported.

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[5] What's in the NEST? Exploring Australia's wellbeing Framework for Children and Young People
[6] Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework[5] is based on evidence that demonstrates the strong association between safety, wellbeing and learning. It supports Australian schools to provide their students with a strong foundation for a fulfilled life by encouraging adherence to the following five domains:

- **Leadership:** visible leadership to inspire positive school communities.
- **Inclusion:** inclusive and connected school culture.
- **Student voice:** authentic student participation.

- **Partnerships:** effective family and community partnerships.
- **Support:** wellbeing and support for positive behaviour.

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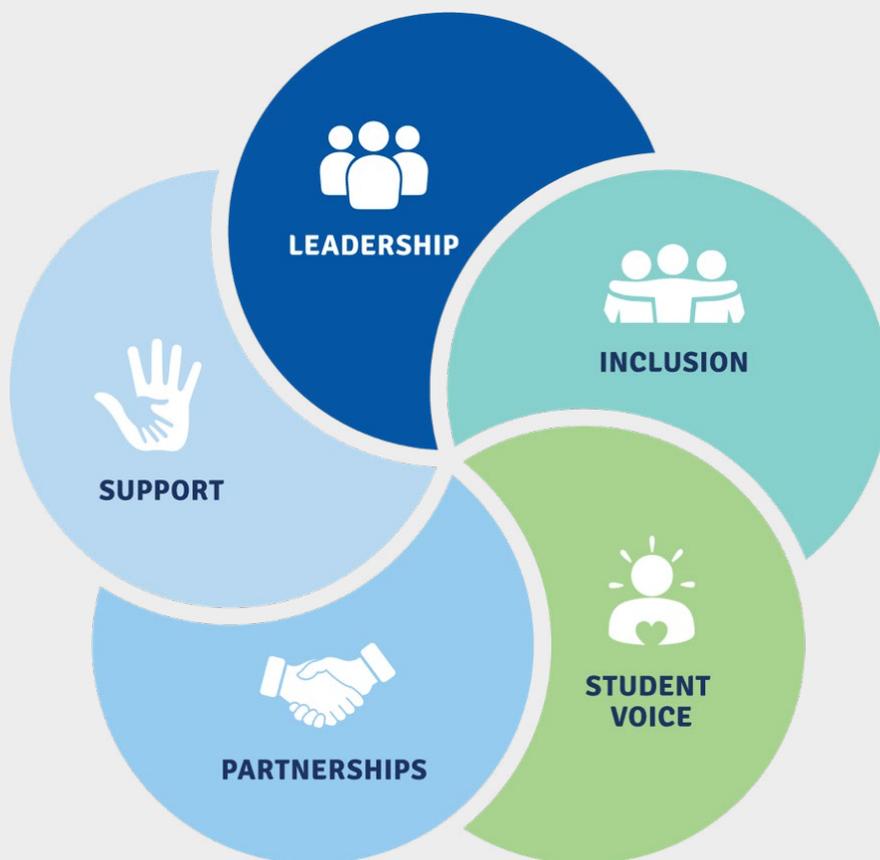
[5] The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

Whole School Wellbeing

As detailed above, whole school wellbeing programmes should address a number of wellbeing domains across a variety of settings including school, home and community. **But why?**

While individual circumstances must be taken into account, there are a number of school-wide, classroom and community practices that should be considered when designing your whole school wellbeing plan.

It is worth noting that implementing a whole school wellbeing programme is not something that can be rushed. Rather, time should be taken to ensure that the whole school community is involved; students, families and staff.

It would be useful to consider setting up a school wellbeing team of staff members who would like to be part of getting it off the ground and who can consult with stakeholders (students, staff, family and relevant community members) to ensure a shared vision for the schools. It is also important to consider what preliminary professional learning should be provided to the staff before a school-wide programme is launched to ensure a shared understanding of what needs to be achieved.

School leadership

The commitment of the leadership to the principles underlying the provision of school wellbeing programmes is vital for the motivation of the staff who are tasked with its implementation[7]. In order for the programme to be taken seriously it requires committed and clear leadership with ideas about how to develop schools from being good to excellent, and to challenge the existing views of education as solely focused on reading, writing and mathematics[8].

Ultimately, there must be a commitment to instituting policies built on the premise of wellbeing from a leadership team that models a culture of open communication, respect and inclusion.

Staff wellbeing

Staff need active support from authorities, administration and colleagues to effectively deal with challenges of their profession[9]. This could involve workplace design, culture, staff resilience and personal social and emotional skills. A whole school wellbeing program relies on modelling of healthy behaviours from all teachers and senior leadership.

Thus, specific instruction for teachers about how to maintain social, physical and emotional wellbeing in their own lives would make it easier for them to both relate the concepts to and support the needs of their students at little to no cost to themselves. Supplementing these programmes along with a staff wellbeing platform like ei Pulse by Linewize, will provide a real-time understanding of how your staff are feeling and measure the impact staff wellbeing has on your school.

Student voice and inclusion

In order to ensure the holistic nature of the programme, it is vital that opportunities are provided for authentic student decision making over matters that affect them, both school wide and within the classroom. Student input should be considered[10] when developing social problem solving strategies to address issues such as bullying, online and physical abuse, as well as proactive initiatives for the overall wellbeing of the student body.

Further to establishing an authentic student voice, particular attention should be given to inclusion, considering the cultural background, academic and character strengths and physical abilities of the student population. Data collection methods (described later in this guide) can be used too.

Teacher professional learning

Supporting teachers with resources at the ground level allows for a smooth and responsive transition through the various levels of wellbeing support.
Further opportunities for collaborative learning through mentoring programmes, learning communities and professional networks, can equip teachers to best handle sensitive issues.

Experts like Character Lab offer actionable advice for parents and teachers that are based on science. They provide research-based guides and tips to cultivate strengths of heart, mind, and will, all contributing towards wellbeing.

Relevant Resources:

• Grit playbook: Passion and Perseverance for long-term Goals
• The Power of Praise
• Decision Making playbook: Choosing wisely

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[7] Makoelle (2014)
[8] White (2016)
[9] Von Der Embse et al. (2019)
[10] Shinde et al. (2020)

Digital Wellbeing

Prioritising student digital wellbeing is not only important for students' health and academic performance, but it also demonstrates the school's commitment to creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

Understanding the fact that students do not differentiate between their online and real world existence is a critical aspect of prioritising digital wellbeing in schools. Digital technology has become an integral part of children's lives, and they are often more proficient in using digital devices and online platforms than adults.

However, they may not have the same level of awareness, maturity and understanding of the potential risks and consequences of theironline behaviour.

Student digital wellbeing refers to the state of being physically, mentally, and socially healthy in the context of using digital technologies. It involves:

Physical health	›	The impact of digital technology on students' physical health, including their eyesight, posture and sleep.
Mental health	›	The impact of digital technology on students' mental health, including their mood, anxiety, stress and attention span.
Social health	›	The impact of digital technology on students' social health, including their social skills, relationships, and sense of belonging.
Cyber safety	›	The ability for students to protect their personal information and avoid online risks such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and identity theft.
Digital literacy	›	The ability of students to use digital technology effectively and responsibly, including their ability to access, evaluate, and create digital content.

Digital Wellbeing cont.

By promoting healthy digital habits and creating a supportive school culture that prioritises digital wellbeing, school leaders can help students develop the skills and resilience they need to thrive in today's digital world.

Some important things to consider when designing your strategy include understanding:

Student perception

- What are they actually worried about?
- What are their perceptions on technology and the reasons problems occur in online environments?

Help seeking

- Consider this as an overarching principle in student wellbeing, how this may happen for students, and where (and from who) they may want to receive help and guidance from.

Messaging

- Consider the language that will engage young people (i.e. is messaging concise & easy to understand).
- Understand the power of authenticity. Research suggests students prefer an informal, colloquial, and pro tech approach to online safety education.

Barriers & influences

- What may cause students to be reluctant to participate, and conversely what will motivate them?

Best practice considerations for promoting a culture of digital wellbeing and student voice in schools include:

1. **Policies and procedures** - Considers student input around ICT use, relevance (language) and accessibility for all school stakeholders.

2. **Education and support** - How extensive, robust and diverse are your schools educational opportunities in regard to educating on digital wellbeing, and its relevance to students? How well are your schools placing the student at the centre of education and decision making?

3. **Staff leadership and conduct** - What role can staff in the school play when it comes to modelling positive digital citizenship for students?

4. **Technology infrastructure** - How is the technology being used to protect the student, while ensuring it is optimising student learning and wellbeing outcomes?

5. **Data informed decisions** - What available information does your school have to prevent incidents, and measure the effectiveness of student wellbeing initiatives?

6. **Incident management procedures** - How effective are your school processes in minimising harm, and protecting and supporting the needs of each student?

Data Collection

Utilising data to inform interventions increases the chance of effectiveness because it allows educated decision making. In the case of whole school wellbeing, this involves collecting information at a student level, as well as assessing progress at different levels of the organisation. The capacity of systems to address school wellbeing can be monitored through the use of custom made rubrics, observations and surveys to ensure continuous improvements are made where necessary.

Student wellbeing can be measured informally, through verbal check-ins or meetings with teachers or counsellors, or with more formal measuring tools like paper or electronic wellbeing check-ins and surveys. Keeping a record of student wellbeing data allows the school to tailor their programmes to suit the changing needs of their students to have the greatest impact.

Implementing a Wellbeing Check-in Tool

Linewize Pulse is a wellbeing tool that enables students to check-in weekly and share how they are feeling in 60 seconds. The tool delivers a real-time snapshot into students' wellbeing.

• School leaders & administrators have a quick snapshot into the overall health of school, and the ability to get ahead of the wellbeing curve.

• Teachers can access their classroom sentiment and historical student check-in data to identify patterns and address issues before they become problems.

• Wellbeing teams & counsellors have the friction-free ability to connect with students who need early intervention. This allows the staff to use their time more effectively.

This tool can also be used to track the impact various initiatives and approaches have on student wellbeing, by monitoring student responses.

How staff and a student council came together as a result of Pulse

With the help of Pulse data, International Community School (Jordan) identified a declining sense of student participation and connectedness compared to prepandemic days.

So the team at ICS reached out to their student parliament to jointly try and respond. This holistic approach led to inter-house sport competitions where students competed within their own year group.

The initiative not only led to increased student participation within their year group, but also increased connectedness to other years by contributing to overall house points. This initiative played an important role in bringing back a level of connectedness among students.

Teacher professional learning

Supporting teachers with resources at the ground level allows for a smooth and responsive transition through the various levels of wellbeing support. Further opportunities for collaborative learning through mentoring programmes, learning communities and professional networks, can equip teachers to best handle sensitive issues.

Experts like Character Lab offer actionable advice for parents and teachers that are based on science. They provide research-based guides and tips to cultivate strengths of heart, mind, and will, all contributing towards wellbeing.

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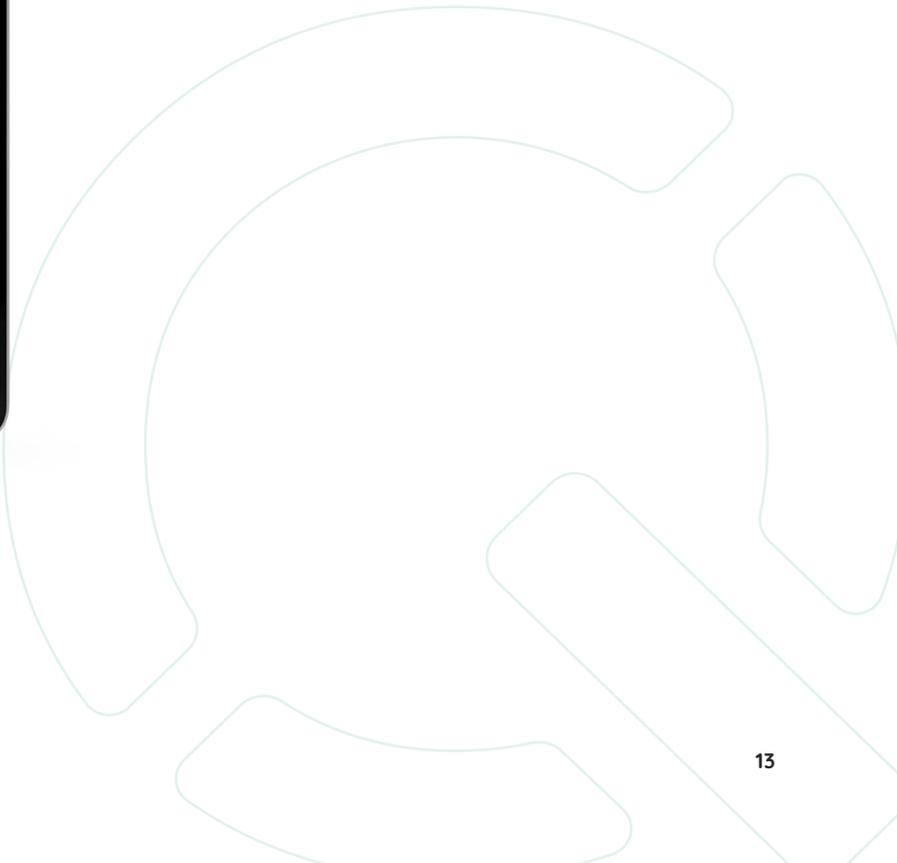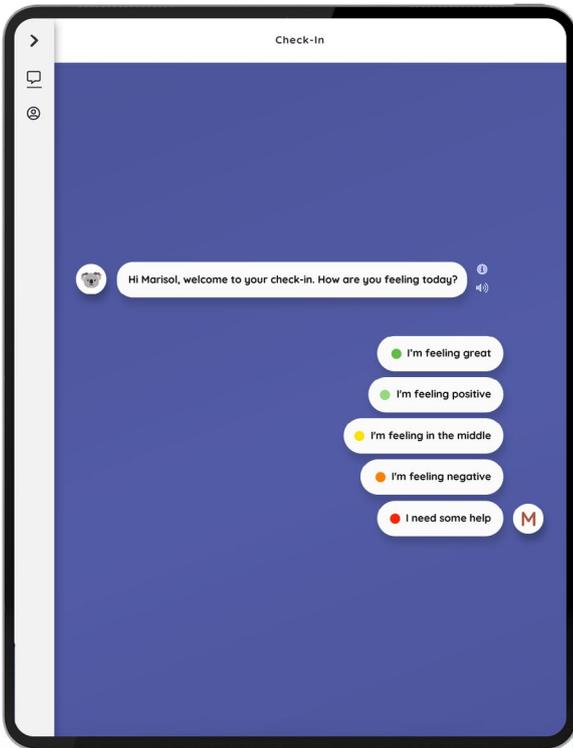
Classroom

Supportive environment

A supportive classroom environment forms the foundation for the growth of students' academic and social-emotional skills. Students who experience support from their teachers are more likely to transfer their skills from theory to practice; while thinking skills could lead to higher levels of academic engagement and achievement, socialemotional skills could lead to higher levels of wellbeing. Thus, teachers and counsellors must be supported to model respectful interactions and respect diversity with professional learning experiences.

Best practice criteria

Ultimately, high quality instruction must meet a set of criteria represented by the acronym SAFE:

• **Sequenced:** activities that are step by step, and coordinated in their approach to skill development.

• **Active forms of learning:** that help students practise and master new skills.

• **Focused:** curriculum that intentionally develops social-emotional skills.

• **Explicit:** targeting specific skills and attitudes

Teaching practices

An explicit wellbeing curriculum programme should be designed to enable students to engage in tasks that may promote their understanding of emotional and social competencies alongside their academic learning.

Many schools either create their own teaching and learning program or purchase an evidencebased wellbeing and resilience curriculum, to ensure that social and emotional skills are explicitly discussed in individual classrooms.

Students can then be given the opportunity to consolidate their social and emotional skills. For example, they can practise their negotiation and relationship skills through cooperative learning, and their critical thinking skills through problem-solving activities. Social and emotional skills can also be revisited through the academic curriculum; teamwork in physical education, perspective taking in history and so on.

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Planning

Here's a step-by-step checklist to implementing whole school wellbeing. As you go through the checklist, **use this assessment rubric to note your progress and needs.** The proposed timescales below indicate when planning can commence.

November - January

- Gain school leadership commitment

- Form a wellbeing team

- Invite staff members

- Identify and engage stakeholders (students, families, community groups) as part of team.

- Introduce the concept of school-wide wellbeing

- Introductory staff meeting

- Information disseminated to parents and caregivers.

- Create vision and values or adapt current to include whole school wellbeing.

- Choose data collection strategies and well being check-in tools for both students and staff.

February - April

- Assess current programmes and policies (ensuring they link with vision and values) using an assessment rubric:

  - Staff wellbeing incl. workplace design, personal resilience.

  - Supportive discipline strategies

  - Family and community partnerships

  - Student support plans

  - Classroom strategies: wellbeing curriculum (may include choosing programme), SAFE pedagogy.

  - Inclusion (cultural, linguistic or developmental differences).

  - Co-curricular activities

- Plan professional development calendar incl. coaching and peer support.

- Communicate expectations of behaviour

- Communicate the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and families.

- Roll out wellbeing check-in tool

Planning cont.

May - July

- Form subcommittees to create goals for:

  - Staff wellbeing incl. workplace design, resilience

  - Discipline strategies

  - Family and community partnerships

  - Student support plans

  - Wellbeing curriculum and SAFE instruction

  - Inclusion (cultural, linguistic or developmental differences).

  - Co-curricular activities

  - Student voice: opportunities to take on leadership and decision making roles.

- Create whole school wellbeing implementation plan for the above by placing goals on a timeline.

- Review data collected thus far on staff and student wellbeing.

- Make adjustments to your plan based on data.

- Select interventions for implementation in next 6 months.

August - September

- Implement social and emotional learning curriculum, including bullying and online bullying prevention.

- SAFE instruction

- Use wellbeing check-ins to monitor the impact of interventions.

November

- Review implementation and outcome data from previous years and update implementation plan.

Conclusion

We suggest a holistic view of school wellbeing with the use of an evidence based wellbeing framework and corresponding domains.

A data driven programme that spans across a variety of settings including school, home and community and takes into account the specific context in which it is working can aim to create an environment where students can be active and positive contributors to the school and society.

About Linewize Pulse

Connect students with help

We know that students will reach out when they feel sad enough and safe enough at the same time – and that time can be fleeting. ei Pulse by Linewize lets the most vulnerable students reach out for help to a specific, trusted educator or school leader, at the time they are ready.

Transform your school

Using Linewize Pulse can transform your school's wellbeing and engagement initiatives from reactive to proactive. Students will become actively engaged in improving their wellbeing, and staff get leading indicators into wellbeing and sentiment, so they can be ahead of the curve.

Real-time insight

Unlike traditional infrequent climate surveys, Linewize Pulse checks in with every student once a week. With a weekly check-in, staff who provide front-line care to students get real-time insight into the wellbeing of individual students as well as the whole school.

Take action and intervene

Linewize Pulse is designed for action, not research. When schools take regular, visible action, students understand that their wellbeing is supported, and become active participants in managing their own wellbeing.

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Linewize
by Qoria

Linewize is a unique response to the challenge of today's connected learning environments, supporting the integration of technology, education and engagement to create cyber safe communities where students thrive.

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Qoria

Linewize is part of Qoria, a global technology company, dedicated to keeping children safe and well in their digital lives. We harness the power of connection to close the gaps that children fall through, and to seamlessly support them on all sides - at school, at home and everywhere in between.

Find out more
www.qoria.com