



See the Signs

What U.S. school districts are
seeing and doing about student
mental health in the digital age

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Foreword

The digital world our students inhabit is evolving at a pace few could have imagined even five years ago. New platforms emerge overnight, online trends can reach millions before lunchtime, and the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence is transforming how young people communicate, learn, and socialize. For schools, this acceleration brings both exciting opportunities and serious safeguarding challenges.

The reality in U.S. education today is that digital safety is no longer a side issue. It is woven into the heart of leadership, classroom practice, school counseling and community trust. Yet we know the pressures are immense. Staff are expected to keep pace with shifting online risks, meet growing mental health needs, manage limited resources, and support students whose digital lives are deeply entwined with their wellbeing.

At Linewize, and across our fellow businesses in the Qoria family, we believe every child has the right to be safe, supported, and thriving in their digital life. For more than two decades, Linewize — now part of Qoria — has worked alongside schools to meet these evolving challenges. We don't just provide technology; we listen closely to what district leaders, principals, IT leads, and counselors tell us they face, day in and day out.

This report is born from those conversations. It reflects the lived reality in U.S. schools and offers practical, time-conscious strategies grounded in global research. It aligns with U.S. education contexts and responsibilities — from state-level guidance to digital citizenship frameworks.

By sharing these insights, our aim is to help schools shift from reactive 'firefighting' to proactive prevention. Together, we can build the capacity, confidence, and connections needed to strengthen digital wellbeing for every student — not just today, but for the constantly evolving digital world they will navigate tomorrow.



Harrison Parker
EVP

Linewize by Qoria

About the Survey

In July 2025, we asked schools across the United States and globally to share what they were seeing and how they were responding to the growing challenges of student digital safety and wellbeing.

Our goal was twofold:

1. To understand these challenges in detail, so we can provide targeted, meaningful support.
2. To foster a sense of shared experience, so that schools can support each other and no school feels isolated in facing these issues.

We received responses from **almost 1,000 schools across the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand** — the largest response ever for a report of this kind.

U.S. participants included district superintendents, principals, digital learning leads, counselors, and classroom teachers.

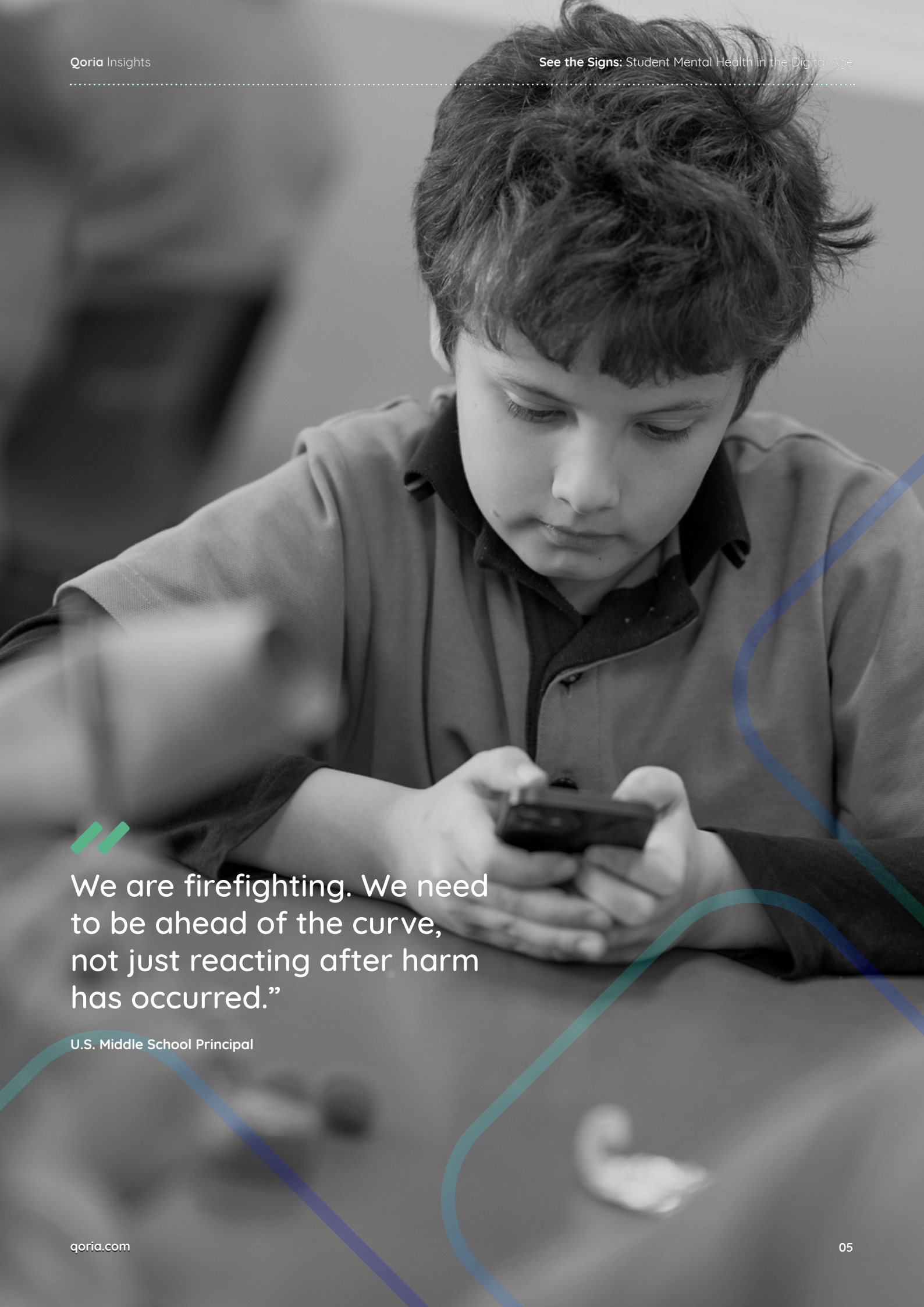
What we heard was clear: Districts and schools are navigating a digital environment that changes faster than many systems can adapt. Online risks evolve daily, and by the time a pattern of harm becomes apparent to schools, students may already have been negatively affected. This makes the ability to notice subtle, early signs — not just obvious harm — more critical than ever.


They also shared that:

- Digital wellbeing concerns are now a weekly or daily reality in many schools.
- Mental health impacts are widespread and severe, affecting focus, attendance, and emotional regulation.
- Students are increasingly turning to new technologies like AI chatbots for emotional support — sometimes in risky or concerning ways.
- Parent engagement remains one of the most significant barriers to progress.
- For many, the speed of online trends is outpacing the school system's ability to respond.

These findings matter not just because they affect individual children, but because they connect directly to schools' responsibilities around safety, wellbeing, and equitable access to support.

This paper is designed to help schools act more quickly, effectively, and confidently, in partnership with students, families, and staff.



 We are firefighting. We need to be ahead of the curve, not just reacting after harm has occurred.”

U.S. Middle School Principal

Section One

Key Findings for U.S. Schools/Districts

1.1 Key findings at a glance

- 90% of respondents are at least moderately concerned about online mental health impacts, 63% are at least very concerned.
- Weekly or daily incidents of digital harm are reported by 47% of respondents.
- Online bullying/harassment and addiction to gaming are each reported by around 8 in 10 respondents.
- TikTok and Snapchat dominate the platforms of concern, followed by Instagram and YouTube.
- AI-related risks are rising fast, with 77% of respondents concerned about students' exposure to unregulated or misleading content.

These findings reflect a stark shift: digital wellbeing is no longer a fringe issue — it's a frontline challenge impacting learning, behavior, and student safety.

Concerns are not limited to a few isolated cases. In many schools, digital harm is a weekly, even daily, occurrence. That frequency signals the need for embedded, school-wide responses — not just one-off interventions.

The most common issues, like online bullying and constant social comparison, aren't separate from the school experience — they influence relationships, concentration,

and students' sense of identity. If left unchecked, they shape school and district culture in ways that normalize harm and silence help-seeking.

Meanwhile, the platforms causing the most concern are those most ingrained in students' everyday lives. While there is global regulatory pressure to ban them outright, we must remember that bans do not always address the root of the problem. What schools/districts need is a clear understanding of how these apps work, why students use them, and where the risks lie — so they see the signs and guide young people with credibility and impact.

Increasingly, students are turning to AI for answers, advice, or even emotional support. While these technologies can appear helpful, the line between support and harm is often blurred.

Unlike regulated education tools, consumer-facing AI platforms are not designed with child safety in mind. Without safeguards, they can:

- Provide unverified or inaccurate advice, which may be taken at face value by younger users.
- Reinforce stereotypes, misinformation and biases built into their training data.
- Generate or expose students to harmful or dangerous content, including sexualized or violent material.

U.S. school/district leaders share these concerns. Those responding to our survey reported the two most pressing risks identified were students being exposed to unregulated or misleading content and confiding in AI chatbots rather than trusted adults.

Both trends highlight the risk that young people may replace human guidance with automated tools that lack accountability or context. For schools, the implication is clear: education and vigilance remain essential. Even as legislation reshapes access to social media platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram across the globe, AI literacy and digital resilience must form part of the curriculum.

Students need to understand how these systems work, where their limitations lie, and how to seek safe, credible sources of support when they feel vulnerable.

3 key actions schools can take now:



1. Address AI use directly through student education, staff guidance and technological interventions.



2. Tailor family engagement to overcome barriers and meet parents where they are.



3. Strengthen early detection systems by combining staff insight with intelligent tools.

With incidents happening in most schools, proactive strategies and the ability to identify issues early are no longer optional — they are essential.

1.2 Context & challenge — the reality for U.S. schools

Our U.S. survey findings highlight a growing reality: safeguarding now depends on the ability to see what is often hidden in students' digital lives.

The risks themselves are well known, but the earliest signs — inappropriate conversations online, harmful content shared, changes in mood, sleep, focus, or social connection — can be subtle and easy to miss.

What matters most is visibility.

When schools can recognize patterns of behavior as they form, rather than after they escalate, they are far better placed to respond early, protect wellbeing, and maintain the trust of their communities.

Scale of concern

90% of U.S. respondents reported being at least moderately concerned about the mental health impacts of students' online behavior. The top reported impacts include anxiety, struggling with concentration, reduced academic focus, negative self-image and sleep disruption.

Behavioral trends driving risk

U.S. schools also identified several recurring digital behaviors that raise concern:

- Online bullying and harassment
- Obsession with social media
- Preoccupation with unrealistic standards set by influencers
- Harmful toxic views and opinions
- Unhealthy attachment to AI/chatbots

These issues rarely appear in isolation. A child who seems tired or disengaged may also be struggling with social media pressure or online exclusion. Yet these early signs often present subtly — masked as normal adolescent behavior or missed entirely in busy school environments.

The challenge for educators is not just recognizing harm, but recognizing and seeing the signs early. That requires new visibility, new conversations, and tools that help staff detect what may otherwise go unseen.

Key platform risks

TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram are cited as top concerns, with YouTube rising quickly in relevance.

What should schools be watching for in the way these platforms operate?

TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram share persuasive design features that increase engagement and risk:

1. **Infinite scroll** — removing natural stopping cues.
2. **Algorithmic recommendations** — creating echo chambers and exposure to extreme content.
3. **Ephemeral content** — creating urgency to check content frequently (FOMO).
4. **Social validation loops** — likes, views, and reactions shaping self-esteem.
5. **Push notifications** — engineered to draw users back in.
6. **Influencer amplification** — promoting narrow ideals and social comparison.
7. **Private messaging** — connecting young people with known and unknown contacts, enabling private conversations that can go undetected.

YouTube poses unique challenges rooted in its role as both an entertainment hub and an information source. Its algorithm often promotes sensational or emotionally charged content, which can lead students down concerning content pathways — ranging from misinformation and harmful stereotypes to unrealistic beauty standards and extremist views.

Because much of this happens passively, while students are “just watching videos,” it can be harder for educators and parents to detect. The perceived trustworthiness of YouTube creators also means that students may absorb content without questioning its accuracy or intent, shaping their beliefs and behaviors in subtle but significant ways.



For the platforms with predatory algorithms, like infinite scrolling, etc., they are destroying students’ ability to attend, remember, and learn while they are teaching them questionable values and norms. For the others I do not think students that age should be able to communicate with each other without some form of moderation. They seem to go Lord of the Flies fairly easily.”

U.S. High School Teacher

Emerging AI risks

U.S. schools report students developing emotional attachments (45%) or confiding in AI tools like character bots or chat companions (60%).

AI companions are already reshaping how some students manage stress, relationships, and challenges. AI systems can appear supportive but may offer advice that is inaccurate, unverified, or even dangerous when taken out of context.

Role-play functions, particularly in unmoderated AI platforms, can blur the lines between safe exploration and the normalization of harmful behavior. Over time, relying on AI “companions” instead of speaking to real people can also reduce students’ willingness to seek help from teachers, school counselors, or parents — cutting schools off from early warning signs.

What makes AI-related risks challenging is how quietly they can emerge. Students may not openly share that they’re turning to AI for support — but there are signs if we know where to look. A shift in mood, withdrawal from peers, or changes in classroom focus can be early cues. Alongside staff awareness, technology can also play a critical role, helping schools identify when a child may be engaging with a chatbot and providing the visibility needed to connect these patterns before they escalate.

On their own, these signs can appear insignificant — a tired student, a distracted moment, a change in tone. But when viewed together, they form a pattern that tells a different story. The shift we need is not more workload, but sharper visibility: the ability to connect the dots early and respond with confidence.

Frequency of digital harm incidents

47% of schools that responded experience digital harm-related incidents at least weekly (21% daily). This frequency suggests that harmful online experiences are part of the day-to-day school environment — and highlights the importance and potential of moving from purely reactive responses to a more proactive, preventative approach.

By spotting patterns and addressing concerns earlier, schools can reduce the pressure on staff, respond with greater confidence, and create more space for positive, wellbeing-focused work.

This is the driving principle behind our See the Signs framework, explored later in this paper: equipping schools with the insight, tools, and confidence to intervene early and help every student feel safe, supported, and able to thrive.



New things are coming out every day. We are learning about them from our students which means we are not keeping up.”

U.S. High School Teacher

1.3 Data deep dive

Level of concern about online mental health impacts

Response options	U.S. %
Extremely concerned	18%
Very concerned	45%
Moderately concerned	27%
Slightly concerned	8%
Not at all concerned	3%

Values are rounded to the nearest integer.

What this means for schools/districts

With 90% of respondents reporting moderate to extreme concern, educators no longer view the mental health impacts of online behavior as rare; they recognize them as part of everyday safeguarding.

Schools are already seeing the signs: anxiety, disrupted sleep, negative self-image, and the resulting effects on focus, attendance, and learning. The challenge now is to move from recognizing these issues to acting earlier, using prevention and early identification to reduce their long-term impact on student wellbeing.



Even the kids who seem okay are under pressure online. It's like a background noise that never switches off."

Elementary School Counselor



Key areas of behavioral concern

Response options	U.S. %
Obsession with social media	83%
Addiction to gaming	77%
Online bullying and harassment	72%
Harmful or toxic views	59%
Preoccupation with unrealistic standards	55%

Values are rounded to the nearest integer.

What this means for schools/districts

While social media obsession, gaming overuse, and online bullying remain the most frequently reported concerns, they rarely exist in isolation. These behaviors often overlap — students immersed in social media may be more vulnerable to peer comparison or exclusion, while those overusing gaming platforms may be exposed to unmoderated chats or escalating aggression. Bullying can occur across both settings, amplifying harm and making it harder to identify a single point of intervention.

The findings point to a crucial opportunity: U.S. schools/districts are not only identifying these risks — they are well placed to lead a shift towards positive digital cultures. By recognizing overlaps, schools/districts can design strategies that don't just reduce harm but actively empower students to thrive in their digital lives.



Platforms of most concern

Platform	U.S. %
TikTok	93%
Snapchat	73%
Instagram	56%
YouTube	54%
Roblox	37%

Values are rounded to the nearest integer.

What this means for schools/districts

Schools/districts are increasingly clear on which platforms carry the greatest day-to-day risks for students. TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram are designed to maximize attention and engagement, often by serving fast-paced, emotionally charged, or highly curated content.

This can expose students to harmful trends, unrealistic social comparisons, and constant pressure to perform or present a certain image. Snapchat's disappearing messages and Instagram's private messaging features add a layer of complexity, making it harder for adults to see what's happening and for students to seek help when things go wrong.

YouTube, while arguably less interactive, continues to influence beliefs and behavior through its recommendation algorithm and influencer culture. By understanding these platform-specific dynamics, schools can offer more targeted support — teaching students not just how to avoid risk, but how to engage critically, confidently, and safely in the digital spaces they use every day.

AI and student behavior

Behaviors of concern	U.S. %
Exposure to unregulated or misleading content	77%
Students confiding in AI instead of trusted adults	60%
Students using AI for role-play or risky conversations	53%
Students developing emotional attachments to AI	45%

Values are rounded to the nearest integer.

What this means for schools/districts

With 60% of respondents reporting that students are turning to AI instead of trusted adults, and 77% concerned about exposure to unregulated or misleading content, the emergence of AI companions adds a new layer of complexity in student digital wellbeing.

As students turn to AI tools like Character.ai, Replika, or ChatGPT for advice, connection, or emotional support, the risk of bypassing trusted human relationships grows.

While these platforms may initially appear safe or helpful, they lack the moderation, context, and accountability of school-based wellbeing supports, opening the door to misinformation presented as fact, inappropriate interactions including sexualized or unsafe content, and growing dependency where students confide in AI rather than parents, teachers, or peers — reducing help-seeking behaviors at times when human support is most needed.

Frequency of online safety incidents

Frequency	U.S. %
Daily	21%
Weekly	27%
Monthly	17%
Rarely	7%
Never	1%
Unsure	27%

Values are rounded to the nearest integer.

What this means for schools/districts

Nearly half of respondents say they experience incidents at least weekly, with just under a quarter seeing them daily. While this frequency shows how embedded digital challenges are in students’ lives, it also presents a clear opportunity to strengthen early intervention.

By using continuous monitoring, equipping staff with targeted training, and adopting processes that identify patterns over time, schools can respond sooner, prevent escalation, and free up more capacity for positive, preventative work that supports student wellbeing.





What respondents believe would most improve their ability to support students' digital wellbeing

Parental engagement stood out as the top priority. More than four in five respondents (80%) said better parental support and resources are critical to tackling digital harms — showing how central families are to noticing and addressing early signs of distress.

Improved student awareness (61%) and access to relatable, real-world examples (53%) followed, highlighting the need to make online risks tangible and understandable for young people. Access to enhanced monitoring and wellbeing tools (56%) was also a strong priority, with respondents recognizing the value of technology in providing visibility into patterns of behavior that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Staff training was rated lower in the US than in other regions (39%), suggesting that while capability building matters, schools are seeking solutions that go beyond professional development. Instead, they called for practical, shared approaches such as multi-agency support (31%) and time-saving intervention workflows (18%) to help make early action more sustainable.

The picture is clear: U.S. schools/districts know the signs are there, but they need parents, students, and technology all working together to make those signs visible and actionable. Support that reduces the burden on staff while increasing early detection is seen as the best way to prevent escalation and protect student wellbeing.

1.4 Global comparison — the U.S. vs. the United Kingdom, Australia & New Zealand

Global comparison				
Key area of concern	U.S. %	UK %	Aus %	NZ %
Very or extremely concerned about mental health impacts	63%	68%	78%	66%
Bullying/harassment	72%	79%	83%	67%
Social media obsession	83%	79%	76%	63%
Students confiding in AI	60%	55%	50%	49%
Incidents at least weekly	47%	68%	46%	42%

Values are rounded to the nearest integer.


What this means for U.S. schools/districts

For U.S. respondents, the data shows high concern across all key indicators, with nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) very or extremely concerned about the mental health impacts of students’ online behavior.

Social media obsession stands out as the most acute issue, with 83% citing it as a major concern — the highest rate across all countries surveyed. Online bullying and harassment remain widespread (72%), but what’s shifting is the rise of AI-related risks: six in ten schools (60%) now worry that students are confiding in AI chatbots instead of trusted adults, concealing risks and reducing help-seeking behaviors.

Weekly or daily incidents of harm (47%) are reported less frequently than in the UK. However, this should not be read as lower risk. Rather, it signals an opportunity for U.S. schools/districts to strengthen early detection and intervention, particularly around behaviors that may be hidden from staff until they escalate.

Overall, the U.S. data highlights a complex but consistent digital landscape that mirrors global patterns. For schools/districts, the priority is clear: adopt holistic, preventative approaches that build digital literacy, foster emotional resilience, and deepen school-home partnerships. The aim is not only to keep pace with digital risks but to stay ahead of them — equipping young people to thrive in a fast-changing online world.



I'm growing increasingly concerned about the profound impact our students' online behaviors may be having on their mental health. Constant pressure to present the perfect persona, unrealistic ideals, and exposure to online bullying seem to be taking a significant toll."

U.S. School Principal

Section Two

Strategies and Solutions

The sooner risks are identified, the greater the opportunity to prevent harm and build a stronger digital culture. Yet in many schools, the earliest signs of distress are subtle and easily missed — changes in sleep, behavior, or classroom focus that may not seem connected to a student's online life.

“See the Signs” is Qoria's call to action: to give educators, parents, and school leaders the tools, insight, and confidence to detect risk early — before support becomes a crisis response.

This is also a chance to think creatively. Whether it's reimagining how parents engage with digital safety themes at school, amplifying student-led initiatives, or getting more value from existing tools, the solutions don't have to be complex to be effective.

The following framework outlines five practical, high-impact areas where schools can adapt, innovate, and strengthen their approach, directly addressing the needs identified in the survey while building capacity for long-term change.

Framework for change

1. Better engage parents and students
2. Peer-led student awareness campaigns
3. Building staff capability without overloading
4. Technology as an enabler and time-saver
5. Addressing AI risks proactively

2.1 Creative, high-impact parental engagement

Parents play a crucial role in shaping students' digital habits, but busy schedules and competing priorities mean many may struggle to engage with traditional school communications. By making engagement interactive, relevant, and easy to fit into family life, schools can help parents not only hear the message but actively practice and reinforce it at home.

How schools can help parents “See the Signs”

A

Reverse Mentoring Evenings:

A window into children's digital worlds

Invite students to become the experts — hosting short sessions where they show parents the apps, games, and platforms they use. This includes walking through privacy settings, trending features, and how to spot red flags. It builds mutual respect and gives adults a rare window into their child's digital world.

B

Family Scenario Sheets:

Dinner table dilemmas — turning tough topics into conversations

Distribute monthly one-page printouts or digital handouts featuring realistic, age-appropriate digital dilemmas (e.g. receiving a nude, peer pressure or upstanding in group chats). Include guiding questions like behaviors that would make them feel proud of themselves, with space for families to write or discuss their responses. This encourages healthy conversation and strengths-based, shared decision-making.

C

Parent-Student Challenges:

Micro-moments that matter

Use simple challenges like “no devices at dinner for a week” or “talk to your child every night for 1 week about their favorite apps (App Chats)” to prompt low-pressure, daily dialogue. Small shifts like these help normalize conversations about online life.

D

Phone-Light Learning Days:

The power of pause

Encourage a school-wide screen-light or screen-free day, then ask students to reflect on the experience at home. Provide parents with a brief conversation guide to explore how their child felt, what they noticed, and what they missed (or didn't).

E

Use Existing Events as Everyday Anchors:

Integrate for ease

Incorporate 2–3 minute digital wellbeing insights into school events where parents are already present — such as sports days, parent–teacher interviews, or newsletters. Keep it practical and aligned to what's happening now in students' digital lives. This helps create digital integration into multiple facets of school and home life.

F

Digital Time Capsule:

A year in screens

Have students and parents capture a snapshot of their current online habits — favorite apps, screen time, online friends, and worries. Revisit the capsule 6 months or a year later to discuss what's changed, what's improved, and what new risks have emerged.

G

Spot the Signs Family Game Night:

Signs, signals and safety

Create and distribute a simple quiz or printable card game where families match digital behaviors to warning signs (e.g. secrecy, changes in mood, unusual gifts). This playful format helps build awareness without fear or judgment.

H

Digital Wellbeing Bingo:

Keeping learning fun

Provide families with a fortnightly or monthly “bingo card” of small, positive online habits — such as “learn how to check app privacy settings”, “talk about one good and one bad thing that happened online this week”, or “spend an hour of power offline together”. It’s light-hearted, but impactful.

Scenario example

A high school ran “Screen-Free Sunday” challenges with family activity photo submissions. Over 60% of families took part, with reported improvements in sleep and family interaction.

Another quick win for schools

Share micro-webinars (live or pre-recorded) — 15-minute sessions with practical tips, offered live and recorded.



2.2 Peer-led student awareness campaigns

Students often respond more positively to messages that come from their peers. A peer-led approach can make digital safety and wellbeing education more relatable, reduce resistance, and build a culture where safe, respectful online behavior is the norm.

Peer advocates can also act as early “sensors” — spotting emerging trends or issues before staff are aware, allowing schools to intervene sooner.

Creative peer-to-peer initiatives

When students lead the conversation, change often follows. These peer-led initiatives support authentic engagement, strengthen student voice, and promote positive digital cultures across grade levels.

A

Student Digital Well-being Ambassadors

Train a select group of students to act as champions for online safety and wellbeing. Ambassadors can:

- Lead assemblies and classroom discussions.
- Mentor younger students.
- Co-design posters, newsletters, or awareness campaigns.
- Introduce in-person initiatives such as Talk Tokens: an easy, preformatted conversation starter or prompt for students designed to break down social barriers and start meaningful conversations between students across the school.
- Act as go-to peers for digital concerns, in partnership with staff.

B

Themed Awareness Weeks

Align with global movements like Safer Internet Day or Anti-Bullying Week, or establish your own “See the Signs” Week led by the student council or well-being teams. Focus on current and relevant challenges — like AI companions or screen time struggles — with themed activities and daily spotlights.

C

Student-Produced School Content

Let students take the lead on creative outputs that speak their language. Short videos, reels, infographics, or podcasts made by students, for students often have more credibility and cut-through than adult-led messages.

D

Specific Inter-Grade Mentoring

Older students can play a powerful role in guiding younger ones. Establish structured mentoring sessions where older pupils share their own learning and offer advice on:

- Navigating social media safely.
- Managing time online.
- Dealing with peer pressure and misinformation.

E

Digital Detective Challenges

In these team-based activities, students analyze fictional scenarios (e.g. a group chat gone wrong or a suspicious new “friend” online), look for clues and present their risk assessments and solutions to staff or peers during classroom or school counselor lessons. It’s a fun, active way to build digital critical thinking through teamwork.

F

Wellbeing Wall or Feed

Give students ownership of a physical or digital space, like a bulletin board or Teams/Google Classroom feed, where they can share:

- Positive online stories — celebrating examples of young people using technology or useful strategies to safeguard, connect, create, or contribute to their community.
- Helpful tips or app reviews — giving students the chance to share what they’ve discovered about staying safe, managing screen time, or using apps for learning and wellbeing.
- Quotes, shout-outs, and kindness campaigns — reinforcing peer-to-peer encouragement and highlighting the values of respect and empathy.

G

Peer-Led “Myth vs. Fact” Campaigns

Students research and debunk common digital myths, such as “Snapchat messages can’t be saved,” or “Only unknown strangers are risky online.” Their findings can be shared through posters, presentations, or social media takeovers.

H

Challenge Chain Events

Create a fun, school-wide challenge where one grade level sets a digital well-being task — like “no devices after 8 pm” — and challenges another grade to top their participation rate. This builds positive peer pressure and healthy habits.

I

Student-Led Parent Briefings

Flip the dynamic and invite trained ambassadors to host short briefings or Q&A sessions for parents. Cover topics like trending platforms, online slang, or where students think adults should pay more attention. It fosters mutual respect and opens up the conversation at home.

Scenario example

A high school created a Grade 10 “Digital Leaders” group who ran a “Don’t Scroll Past” campaign on how to report harmful content. The campaign had multiple touchpoints and visible reminders shared on posters throughout the school, as well as weekly reminders in school assemblies.

Reports to the school counselor team rose by 40% in the following term, with several incidents addressed before escalation.

Another quick win for schools

Ask form groups to create a one-minute “top tip” video for staying safe with AI, or social media like TikTok or Snapchat. Share via the school’s internal platforms or assemblies.

2.3 Building staff capability without overloading

Supporting digital safety doesn't have to mean adding hours to a teacher's day. These short, high-impact strategies help staff stay informed, engaged, and equipped — without overwhelming already full schedules.

How leaders can help staff “See the Signs” with staff capability initiatives

A

Micro-Learning Modules

Work with experts to deliver regular 10–15 minute online refreshers covering new apps, slang, and emerging risks. Modules can be completed flexibly and repeated across terms. Focus on what staff really need to know — how the platform works, what risks to watch for, and how to start conversations with students.

B

App of the Month Briefings

Incorporate a 5-minute update into regular staff meetings. The IT lead or digital wellbeing ambassador highlights one trending platform — outlining its purpose, features, risks, and how students are using it. Keep it punchy and practical.

C

Scenario-Based Training

Use anonymized, real incidents from your own (or another school) to guide the discussion. Walking staff through the early warning signs, how it was handled, and what might have helped earlier builds real-world understanding and reinforces the relevance of local policies.

D

Shared Resource Bank

Create a centralized, staff-only hub (on your intranet or drive) containing:

- FAQs on popular apps
- Guidance on managing disclosures
- Reporting procedures
- Quick-reference guides for signs of harm

Keep it updated and easy to navigate — make it the first place staff turn to, not the last.

E

“A Day in The Life” Workshops

Run occasional PD sessions where staff simulate a student’s online journey — navigating platforms, seeing algorithmic content, handling peer messages, or facing risky prompts. It’s an eye-opening way to build empathy and awareness.



F

Spot the Signs Storyboard

Each term, create a visual flowchart of a real (but anonymized) safeguarding journey around a key digital harm. Allocate responsibility to a different department each term.

Highlight:

- The initial red flags.
- What action was taken.
- The outcome for the student.

Display in staff areas or briefings to reinforce the power of early intervention.

G

5-Minute “Hot Topic” Pods

Record short audio or voice memo briefings on current issues — like deepfake images, AI chatbots, or online challenges — that staff can listen to on the go. Leaders, IT leaders or student digital ambassadors can batch-record a term’s worth for flexible access.

Scenario example

An elementary school adopted quarterly cluster “digital drop-ins” — optional 20-minute briefings over coffee, covering trending platforms and how to respond to related safeguarding concerns. Attendance averaged 65% of staff without mandatory scheduling.

Another quick win for schools

Use PD days to run a “myth-busting” speed session: 10 myths about online safety in 10 minutes.



2.4 Technology as an enabler and time-saver

With incidents occurring weekly or even daily in most U.S. schools, staff cannot rely on reactive case-by-case responses without becoming overwhelmed.

The right technology — used strategically — can transform safeguarding from firefighting to foresight. It can surface risks earlier, give staff more confidence in their decisions, and reduce the time spent on long, complex interventions by stopping issues before they escalate.

Technology is no longer a “nice to have” in safeguarding; it’s an essential partner.

Schools that combine human vigilance with intelligent filtering, monitoring, and classroom tools have a far clearer picture of digital risk than those relying on eyes and ears alone, or filtering alone. And when those tools are up to date and configured for education settings, they can detect the slang, code words, and hidden behaviors that basic systems routinely miss.



My main concern is how desensitized they have become to bullying, shaming and violence. Our district does well at monitoring their Chromebooks and students get red-flagged for specific behaviors.”

U.S. IT Director

How schools/districts can “See the Signs” with technology

- **Integrate monitoring and wellbeing tools** — Choose solutions that link alerts directly to school counselor workflows so nothing is missed. Human-moderated, real-time monitoring can flag concerning activity — from harmful content searches to risky conversations — within minutes, allowing staff to act swiftly.
- **Custom keyword and risk profiles** — Tailor detection to include slang, current local trends, and context-based triggers so early warnings are accurate and relevant.
- **Dashboard-driven decision making** — Use aggregated trend data to guide targeted and thematic interventions, such as assemblies (announcements or safety messaging reinforcement), parent updates, or peer-led campaigns, rather than generic or blanket messaging.
- **Parental control apps** — Provide parents with tools that go beyond screen-time limits to include content filtering, app blocking, and activity reporting at home, enabling consistent protection, alerts and information sharing across school and home environments.
- **Granular, real-time filtering** — Ensure filters can block harmful or illegal content instantly while allowing access to valuable learning resources. The ability to adjust rules for age, context, and curriculum needs is critical.
- **Classroom management tools** — Give teachers the ability to see and guide what students are doing online in real time, adapt internet access to the lesson, and support individuals who need extra help staying on task.
- **Student wellbeing check-ins** — Adopt regular, proactive digital check-in tools that give students a safe way to share how they’re feeling, with options for anonymity. AI-powered analysis can highlight concerning patterns early and prompt timely mental health support.

Scenario example

A middle school used its digital monitoring platform to detect a sudden spike in harmful language on a gaming platform. Within 48 hours, staff ran a targeted 8th grade session on online bullying and exclusion in online games during the school counselor period, supported by digital leaders, reducing incidents by 30% in the following fortnight.

Another quick win for schools

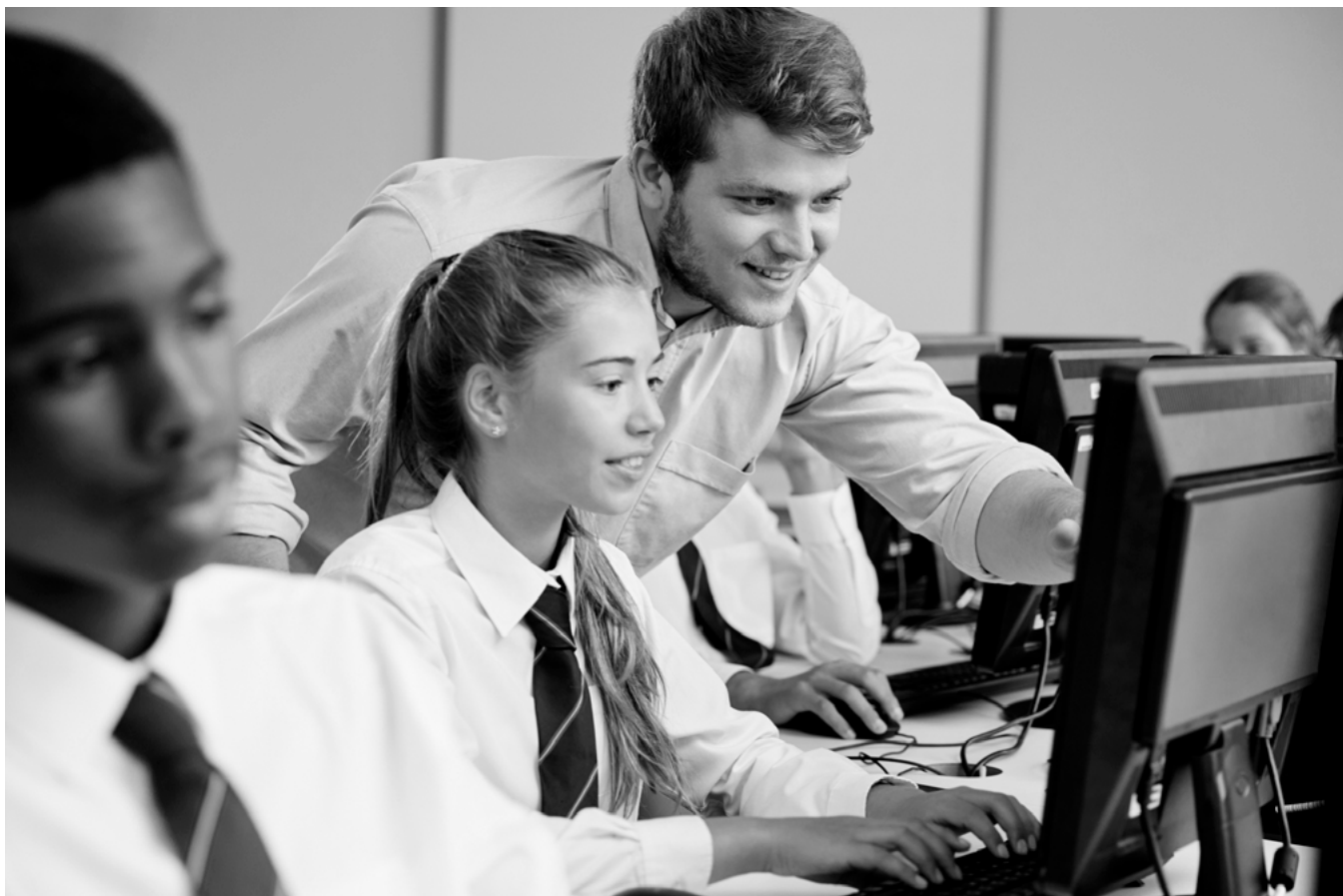
Audit your existing tech stack before buying new tools — many schools already have powerful, underused capabilities in their current systems. A simple configuration change or training session can unlock features that save staff hours and improve student safety.

Questions schools/districts can ask themselves when reviewing their tech stack:

- Would we know if a student shared something on their school device that indicates they are in danger, and could we respond within minutes?
- Can our digital monitoring detect coded language, slang, or risky AI role-play scenarios?
- Are our filters able to detect harm in real time, and do they avoid over-blocking valuable resources?
- Do our classroom tools give teachers the flexibility to adapt online access instantly?
- Are we offering parents practical, flexible safeguarding options that fit their child's age and maturity?

The bottom line

Modern safeguarding requires modern tools. When deployed well, technology does more than save time — it increases visibility, sharpens decision-making, and gives schools the confidence to act before harm occurs.



2.5 Addressing AI risks proactively

As previously mentioned, over half of the U.S. school respondents shared that they are experiencing students confiding in AI chatbots instead of trusted adults.

Without proactive education, these habits can normalize unsafe or isolating behavior and reduce opportunities for staff to spot early warning signs. AI is here to stay — the challenge is ensuring it supports, rather than replaces, healthy, human-centered help-seeking.

How schools can see the signs with AI


- **AI literacy lessons** — Build into computing or HPE, English or Technology curricula to teach safe use, limits of AI advice, and bias awareness.
- **Role-play the risks** — Safely simulate risky AI interactions and discuss how to recognize when something doesn't seem right, and how to respond.
- **Clear AI use policy** — Align with statutory guidance and legislation recommendations, specifying permitted educational uses and prohibited scenarios.
- **Staff-parent alignment** — Share the same guidance with families so messaging is consistent.
- **“Ask an adult first” pledge** — Students sign a simple agreement that they will check with a trusted adult before acting on AI-generated advice in sensitive situations.
- **Decode the bot workshop** — Students bring anonymized AI responses to class, and together the group fact-checks, identifies bias, and rewrites them with safer, more accurate information.
- **AI companions reality check** — A short, discussion-led session unpacking the limits of “AI friends” and how they differ from human relationships, followed by a “real connection” activity in pairs or groups.

Scenario example

A middle school introduced a “3 checks” framework: Before acting on AI advice, check with a trusted adult, check a reliable source, and check your instincts. Student surveys showed a 20% increase in those saying they’d approach staff first.

Another quick win for schools

Include an “AI Tip of the Month” update in newsletters, flagging risks and safe uses.



Just like anything, technology is always evolving. You have to try to get a jump on cyber safety. It is difficult at times, especially with budgets. So we do the best we can, considering each situation.”

U.S. School Principal

Section Three

See the Signs — Free Resources

School resource companion

At Qoria, we know schools are under immense pressure and that safeguarding can feel overwhelming. That's why we've created a set of simple, ready-to-use resources to help get you started.

These practical supports are designed to make it easier to See the Signs early, open up conversations, and strengthen digital wellbeing, without adding to staff workload. They're not complex systems, but small steps that can make a meaningful difference.

These resources are flexible, classroom-tested, and ideal for staff briefings, parent engagement, counselor

planning, and student-led initiatives. They're structured to work with what schools already have in place — no new systems or training required.

To download these resources, visit www.qoria.com/see-the-signs

1. At a glance: Staff slide decks — Top signs and quick wins

What it is

A three-slide briefing resource to use in staff meetings or planning sessions.

Slide 1: Top 5 signs to watch for

Slide 2: Student behaviors to monitor

Slide 3: 3 quick wins for schools: Immediate actions

Why it helps: Schools can raise staff awareness fast, align their team around the signs that matter, and create momentum for proactive action.

2. Parental engagement: Parent-child Q&A guide — Let's Talk Tech

What it is

A conversation guide for schools to share with parents to open up real, non-judgmental conversations at home.

Includes 10 questions designed to explore digital habits, pressure, online identity, AI companions, and family boundaries.

Also includes a film recommendation (*Childhood 2.0*) to co-watch and spark discussion.

Why it helps: Schools can equip families with a simple, no-expertise-needed tool to strengthen digital dialogue and early risk recognition at home.

4. Staff Meeting Scenario Pack

What it is

A printable or digital resource for staff training or wellbeing team planning.

Includes 6 detailed, real-world scenarios covering:

- AI confidants
- Group chat harms
- Gaming fatigue
- Hidden struggles in high-achievers
- TikTok trends
- Early signs of online radicalization

Each scenario includes: context, digital signals, why it matters, discussion prompts, and key insight.

Why it helps: Offers low-burden, high-impact professional learning that builds confidence and enables earlier interventions.

5. Technology as an enabler & time-saver: 10-Point Tech Audit Checklist

What it is

A reflective tool for IT, wellbeing, and leadership teams.

Covers key questions such as:

- Are systems picking up context, not just content?
- Are alerts routed to those who can act?
- Is student digital behavior integrated into support planning?

Why it helps: Helps schools understand where their current infrastructure supports early intervention — and where simple changes can make a big difference.

6. Addressing AI risks proactively: “3 Checks for AI” poster

What it is

A bulletin board poster encouraging students to pause and question AI-generated content.

The checks:

1. Check with a human
2. Check the motive
3. Check for context

Why it helps: Builds critical thinking and promotes healthier relationships with AI tools. Ideal for classrooms, digital literacy lessons, or wellbeing walls.

Together, these resources help schools take meaningful steps toward safer, more connected digital environments for students, without creating more work.

7. Continuing the conversation — Spotlight on Student Digital Safety — The Qoria Podcast

Qoria's **Spotlight on Student Digital Safety** podcast gives school leaders a space to hear directly from peers and experts who understand the pressures they face. It provides timely insights on emerging digital risks, shares practical strategies that have worked in other schools, and offers reassurance that they are not navigating these challenges alone.

For leaders who are short on time, the podcast distills complex issues into actionable takeaways that can inform decision-making, strengthen safeguarding practices, and build staff confidence.

Recent episodes featuring U.S. guests include:

The Day We Stopped Guessing: Tools That Helped Calvert County Make Student Digital Behavior Visible

What happens when a school stops guessing and starts seeing the full picture of student digital behavior? In this episode, Matt and Devin from Calvert County Public Schools share how the right tools are helping staff spot patterns earlier, intervene faster, and spark more meaningful learning. If you're looking for real-world strategies to build digital visibility in your district, this conversation is packed with insights you can use now.

AI in Action: How Pewaukee School District is Preparing Students for Life Beyond the Classroom

In this episode, Yasmin London speaks with Rachel Yurk, Chief Information and Technology Officer at Pewaukee School District, about how schools can bring AI to life — not just as a concept, but as a future-ready skillset. From ethical use to hands-on learning, Rachel shares practical ways to integrate AI into the classroom and support teachers through professional development. A must-listen for any educator ready to equip students for an AI-powered world.

The full Spotlight on Student Digital Safety — The Qoria Podcast episode list can be found [here](#).

Episodes are free and available on YouTube and Spotify.

Encourage school leaders, school counselors, and IT leads to use these tools and resources as discussion starters in staff meetings or PD sessions.



Final Thoughts — A Shared Mission

Every school/district leader, IT director, classroom teacher, and school counselor in the U.S. knows the reality: online risks are constant, fast-moving, and often deeply personal for the students in our care. But within that reality is also a truth worth holding onto: schools are already doing extraordinary work.

Across the country, in classrooms, corridors, and staff meetings, you are not just responding to incidents; you are shaping a generation's relationship with technology. Every proactive conversation, every moment you listen without judgment, every time you connect a student with the right support, you are building digital resilience that can last a lifetime.

The challenges can feel relentless, and we know the pace of digital change will not slow down. But with the right systems, education, and partnerships, schools can stay ahead of harm — not just respond after it. The signs are there — sometimes quiet, sometimes disguised — but they always have meaning.

When we help schools see them, we don't just reduce harm — we increase connection, care, and the chance for every student to thrive. When we get it right, the impact is transformative. Students feel safer speaking up, parents

feel better equipped to guide their children, and staff feel supported, not isolated, in the safeguarding role they carry.

Linewize's mission is to stand alongside you in that work, not as an observer but as an active partner. Our belief is simple: no child should fall through the cracks of the digital world. And together, we can work to ensure that doesn't happen.

We are excited to set the standard for what safe, supported, and thriving looks like in 2025 and beyond. And to ensure the online spaces our students inhabit every day are places of positive learning, curiosity, and respect — because they deserve nothing less.

The tools are here. The knowledge is here. Most importantly, the will is here. The rest is what we build together.



Contact Us

If you need any help reviewing your safeguarding technology, want to find out about technologies you are yet to adopt such as digital monitoring, classroom technologies or parental apps, or if you want assistance working with staff, parents or students, Linewize can help.

Please email **inquiries@linewize.com** in the first instance, tell us what you're interested in and we'll connect you to the right person.

None of us is as powerful as all of us.

Appendix 1

About Linewize & Qoria

We see ourselves not just as a vendor, but as a trusted partner to schools and districts.

Linewize is designed to evolve alongside your needs — starting with best-in-class filtering and expanding into human-moderated digital monitoring, classroom tools, wellbeing tools, and parent engagement platforms. a connected ecosystem that supports IT teams, educators, student wellbeing staff, families, and students alike.

Our solutions are built to work together, helping you create a sustainable digital wellbeing framework that grows over time and responds to the real challenges facing your community.

Qoria is Linewize's parent company. Together with our fellow Qoria businesses in the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, and New Zealand we are raising the bar in student digital safety. We are innovating with safeguarding technology, advocating and lobbying for safer policies and practices from governments, big tech, and others, and leaving no stone unturned in our quest to ensure every child is safe and thriving in their digital lives.

Appendix 2

Further Reading for U.S. Schools/Districts

Statutory & Government Guidance

Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act

Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/rules/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule-coppa

Department of Education’s AI Toolkit

www.ed.gov/about/ed-overview/artificial-intelligence-ai-guidance

Sector and NGO Resources

Online Safety Institute (FOSI)

An international nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., FOSI works to make the online world safer for children and families by promoting best practices, tools, and resources that respect free expression. It collaborates closely with schools, parents, policymakers, and industry leaders — providing guidance, campaigns, and educational programs like the “Good Digital Parenting” initiative.

Common Sense Media

A leading U.S. nonprofit, Common Sense Media provides trusted resources to help families, schools, and communities navigate media and technology. Its age-based ratings, research, and digital citizenship curriculum support safe, responsible, and balanced technology use for children and teens.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)

Headquartered in Virginia, NCMEC is the nation’s clearinghouse for issues related to missing and exploited children. It operates the CyberTipline, a key reporting system for online exploitation, and works closely with law enforcement, schools, and industry to protect children in digital and physical spaces.

Appendix 2 (continued)

Further Reading for U.S. Schools/Districts

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

A professional organisation representing 67,000 pediatricians across the United States, the AAP provides research-based guidance on children's health and development. Its digital safety recommendations — covering screen time, social media use, and online wellbeing — are widely used by schools, families, and healthcare providers.

International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC)

A globally focused nonprofit headquartered in Virginia, ICMEC leads efforts against child sexual exploitation, trafficking, and abduction. It coordinates a missing-children network across 29 countries and provides law enforcement training in over 100 countries

Technology & Wellbeing Tools

Linewize Online Safety Hub for schools and parents

www.linewize.com/solutions/online-safety-hub

Qustodio for families and schools

www.qustodio.com

Appendix 3

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for U.S. School Leaders, IT Directors,
and School Counselors



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