

GUIDE

Creating Powerful Parent Partnerships in Online Safety - A Guide for Schools

Introduction

The past couple of years has shown the importance for schools to create and nurture strong collaborative partnerships with families when it comes to online safety. This guide provides tips to help your school prepare for making powerful partnerships that will drive cyber safety success for your school community in 2023.

Key takeaways

- Student digital safety and wellbeing **does not sit solely with schools or families** - it needs both parties to work closely in partnership.
- It's important schools **understand priorities for families** and share up to date information and advice in a timely way.
- A **collaborative, ongoing approach** to the partnership helps to keep online safety and wellbeing front of mind throughout the year.



Prioritising **partnerships**

More often than not, when online issues happen outside of school hours, the impact is felt at school and it's the school who families look to for advice.

While schools often have a responsibility to ensure students' safety and wellbeing, it's equally important that parents and families have the confidence and knowledge to respond when things don't go as planned. This partnership between home and school helps to reduce risk, minimise harm and ensure young people receive support regardless of when and where an incident occurs.

Online safety **challenges**

Children

- + Children's screen-time spiked by 52% between 2020 and 2022.¹
- + 44% of Australian young people report having a negative online experience in the last 6 months.²
- + Cyberbullying in New Zealand is the third highest in the world.³
- + 114% increase in reports of the non-consensual sharing of intimate images in 2020.⁴

Parents

- + 84% of parents worldwide are worried about their child's online safety.⁵
- + 60% of parents say they have directly witnessed an online safety threat incident related to their child.⁵
- + One third of Australian parents said their children go to bed with a smartphone or other device every night.⁴



partnerships

Taking action

We recommend that the home-school online safety partnership stretches beyond a one-off family information evening at the start of the year to include initiatives throughout the school year.

Here are a few suggestions:

01

Get started

Undertaking a [guided self-review](#) is an effective way to reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of your school's online safety approaches.

- What is the school doing already around online safety, citizenship and wellbeing?
- What has the impact of those initiatives been?
- What evidence is there to support the strategies that have been implemented?

02

Understand

Create opportunities for families to share their understandings, experiences and concerns. This will provide valuable insights that can inform your planning. It could be via a survey or anecdotal information gathered during conversations. Small focus groups or parent committee meetings are useful opportunities for open dialogue.

- What are their concerns?
- Where are the knowledge/skill gaps?
- How would they prefer to receive information?

03

Identify and plan

Identify next steps by using the data gathered from dialogue and feedback with families and students, and from your [filtering and reporting tools](#). What issues keep coming up? What red flags or alerts are you receiving from your reporting or [digital safeguarding technologies](#)?

Student wellbeing and online safety is not a quick fix, so **it's important to prioritise:**

- What's most important in your unique school context.
- What can wait until later.

Based on your identified priorities, **create a clear plan** with identified actions and responsibilities.

- Share the action plan internally and with your community.
- Make sure events such as parent information evenings, awareness days or student-led initiatives are displayed in school calendars.

04

Implement

It's not enough just to plan great initiatives; it's when those plans are implemented that change happens.

- **Information evenings** at the start of the year help to kick-start the home-school partnership, however, communication needs to be ongoing throughout the year too. For [Linewize Community](#) schools, online safety information for parents is readily at hand and easy to share via your school's [Online Safety Hub](#).
- **Mini workshops, focus groups, webinars and Q & A sessions** all offer valuable opportunities to collaborate with your community, including sharing your school's digital safety and wellbeing journey or gathering input from your community about upcoming initiatives.
- **Include student voice and student leadership** as well - some of the most impactful initiatives are led by students who have been empowered to share their knowledge and experiences.

05

Share

Families can feel helpless when online issues occur and impact their children.

- **Direct families** to sources of current and relevant information throughout the year, such as the Linewize [Online Safety Hub](#), as issues arise or trends appear to increase their knowledge, confidence, and engagement.
- **Facilitate open two-way communication** to allow the sharing of ideas, concerns and solutions.
- **Increase awareness** of the school's online safety expectations, policies and procedures within the wider community, including transparency around reporting pathways.
- Encourage the use of **parental control tools** in the home.

06

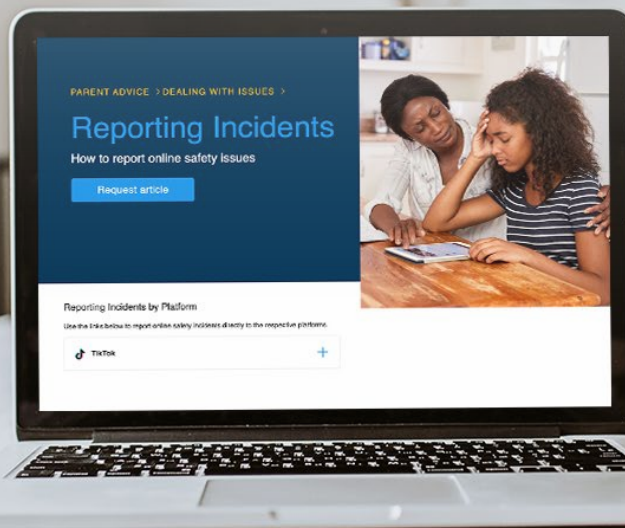
Check and review

Schedule time to review your plans and initiatives. Schools are busy places, so ensure dates are achievable and the resources required are available. If initiatives haven't quite had the expected impact, regroup, replan and try again.

Be open

Uncertainty and increased isolation can erode connections and so finding opportunities to collaborate and problem-solve is imperative.

Establishing **solid and open partnerships** helps school communities develop the capacity and confidence to support their children online. Sometimes the best source of information about connecting with families comes from young people so make sure you incorporate student agency and voice into initiatives, from ideas and planning through to implementation.



Want to engage your school community in digital safety but don't know **where to start?**

Book a free Community Engagement Consultation to learn how to turn your parents into cyber safety partners and create a healthy digital culture.

[BOOK A CONSULTATION](#)



Further reading

Blog: School Holidays - 6 tips for healthier student digital habits

linewize.io/anz/blog/school-holidays-6-tips-for-healthier-student-digital-habits

By engaging and educating parents and students before and during the holidays, schools can take steps to foster positive digital behaviours, help mitigate safety risks and ensure students return to school ready to learn

A Schools' Guide to Promoting Positive Digital Behaviours During the Holidays

linewize.io/anz/promoting-positive-digital-behaviours-during-the-holidays

An in-depth guide for schools on promoting positive digital behaviours and engaging your whole school community in online safety these holidays.

About Linewize

We empower school communities to guide students towards safe and positive behaviours in their digital lives. When students know how to stay digitally safe and well, their confidence grows, their resilience increases and learning improves.

We combine safeguarding technology, child psychology expertise, indepth educational material and awareness initiatives to help schools build positive digital cultures - where students can thrive. Our goal is to work together to save and better children's lives; empower parents; deliver for tomorrow's educators and to be a key influencer in digital safety globally.

¹Assessment of Changes in Child and Adolescent Screen Time During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. Sheri Madigan, PhD1,2; Rachel Eirich, MSc1,2; Paolo Pador, BSc(Hons)1; et al

² The digital lives of Aussie teens, eSafety Commissioner (2021).

³ Third highest from 29 countries surveyed - Global Advisor Cyberbullying Study, IPSOS, 2018

⁴ Julie Inman Grant, eSafety Commissioner, 2020

⁵ Kaspersky's Family Campaign Report, September 2019

⁶ Growing Up Digital Australia study, Gonski Institute for Education (UNSW)