PESA 2025 National Wellbeing Conference

Solution Summit Outcomes

September 2025

COLLECTIVE SOLUTIONS, REAL CHANGE

The Solution Summits, held during PESA's 2025 National Wellbeing Education Conference, were dynamic, hands-on workshops where lived experience met creative problem-solving. In just two hours, educators and delegates harnessed the power of Design Thinking to address real, pressing challenges facing schools today.

These collaborative sessions focused on two core areas:

- **Staff Wellbeing:**
  - Fuelling teacher wellbeing and building support systems for a thriving future
  - Reimagining what wellbeing looks like for educators

- **Student Wellbeing:**
  - Developing social and relational skills
  - Cultivating healthy relationships with technology

Each theme was shaped by educators themselves, drawing from their experiences, concerns, and aspirations. Together, they identified the issues that matter most, surfaced the barriers we face, and co-created practical, forward-thinking solutions.

In the pages ahead, you will find a summary of the key topics explored and the outcomes generated through this collective insight and collaboration.
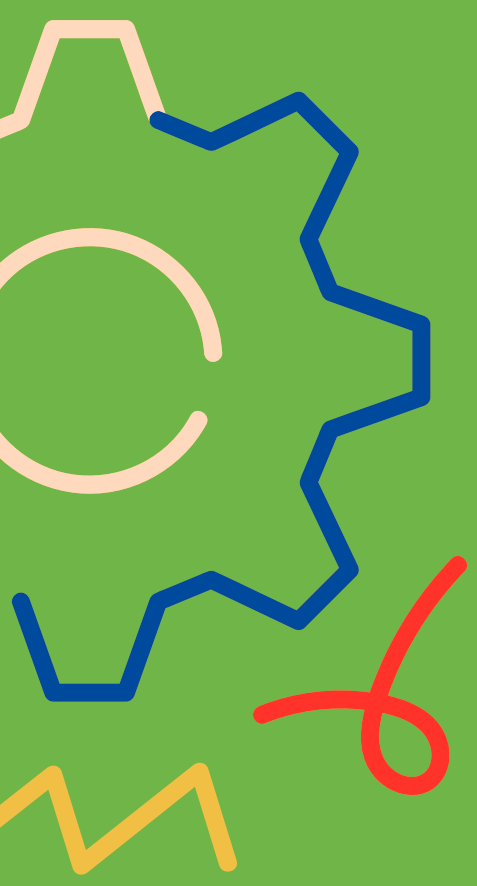
CULTURE

This is important because:

It provides **psychological safety**, so that...

- I can feel safe being myself.
- I can regulate my emotions to help others.
- I can be vulnerable, and show vulnerability.
- I am supported to take risks, to try new things.

And **enables** us to...
- Use a shared language.
- Foster a sense of belonging.
- Promote respect for each other.
- Bring everyone on the journey (leave no-one behind).
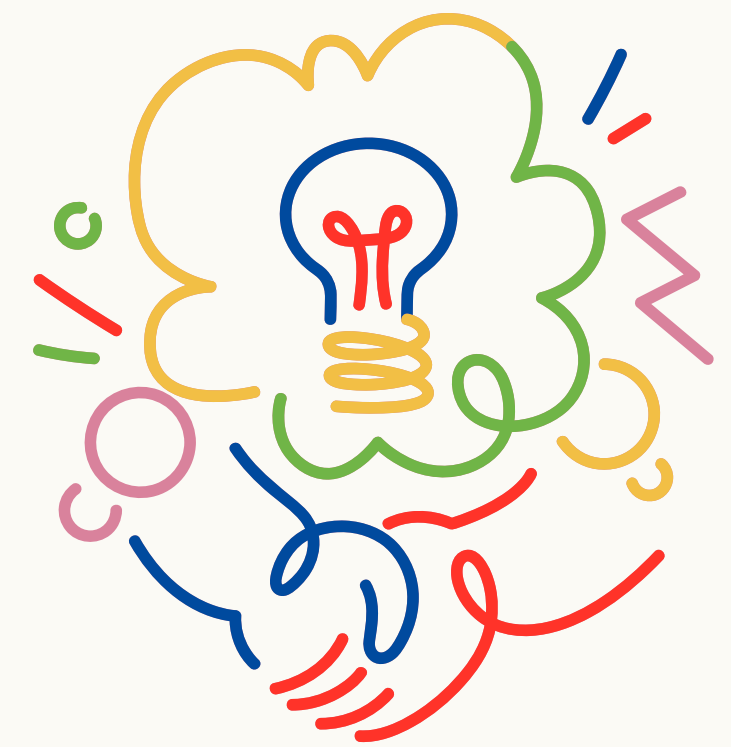
Barriers experienced are:

Mindsets:
- Traditionalist thinking.
- Badge of honour: Sacrifice over self-care often leads to burnout and diminished wellbeing.

Practical solutions include:

- Gain **collective agreement** of the problem.
- Create a **shared vision.**
- Define **shared values.**
- **Lead by example** at every level.
- Establish **new norms** and attitudes.
- **Start small** with your class and teams.
- **Measure** the culture and take action to improve.
- Enhance **transparency** through regular reviews.
- **Showcase** good practice e.g. "positive gossip".
- Build **trust** between students, staff and leadership, via:
  - Conflict resolution process.
  - Open and frequent communication.
  - Equitable and inclusive 360º feedback.
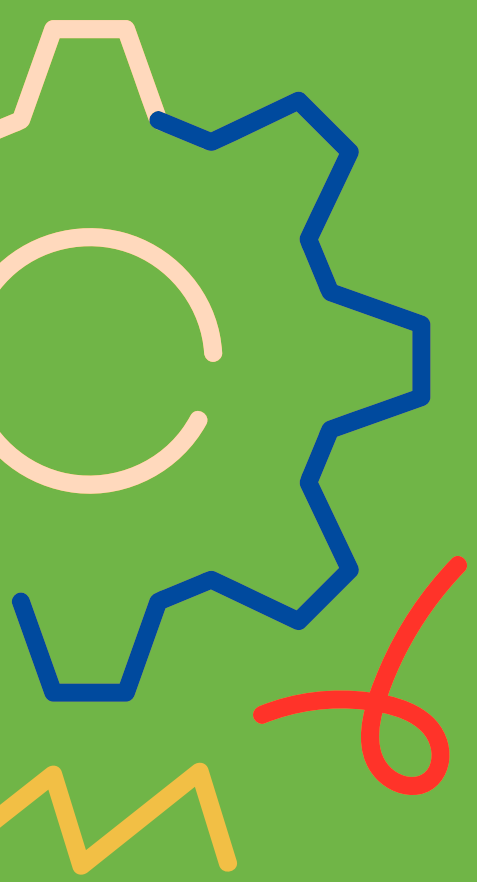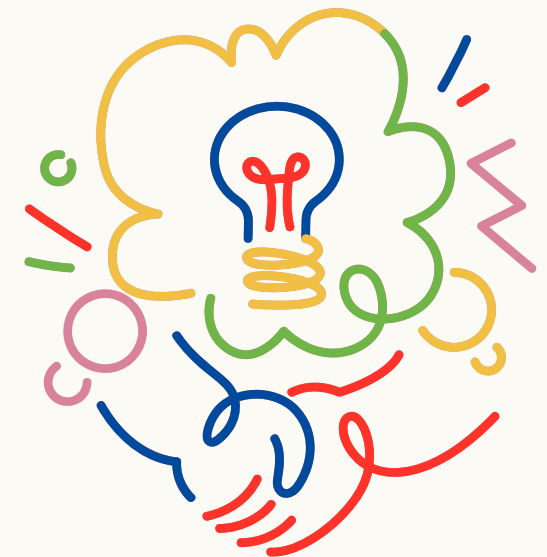
To get support for a wellbeing future, you need:

STAFF ADOPTION

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This is important because:

Everyone needs to believe in the future:

- We need adoption from everyone to ensure success.
- We need everyone onboard to have a real impact.
- With whole-staff support, change is lasting.

Barriers experienced are:

Senior leadership team not bought-in:

- Lack of trust.
- No strategic direction.
- Wellbeing not prioritised or taken seriously.

Staff not bought-in:

- Token efforts and no follow through.
- Perceived as a waste of their time.

Poor adoption:

- Too much theory, not enough practical.
- Rigid adherence to a wellbeing program.

Practical solutions include:

Plan, Do, Check, Act:

- Share evidence and research on importance of wellbeing.
- Name the faults of the past and co-create the future vision.
- Create plans collaboratively with staff and student voice.
- Embed wellbeing and adoption into school plans.
- Measure wellbeing then use data for action.
- Monitor, reflect, evaluate and report on progress.
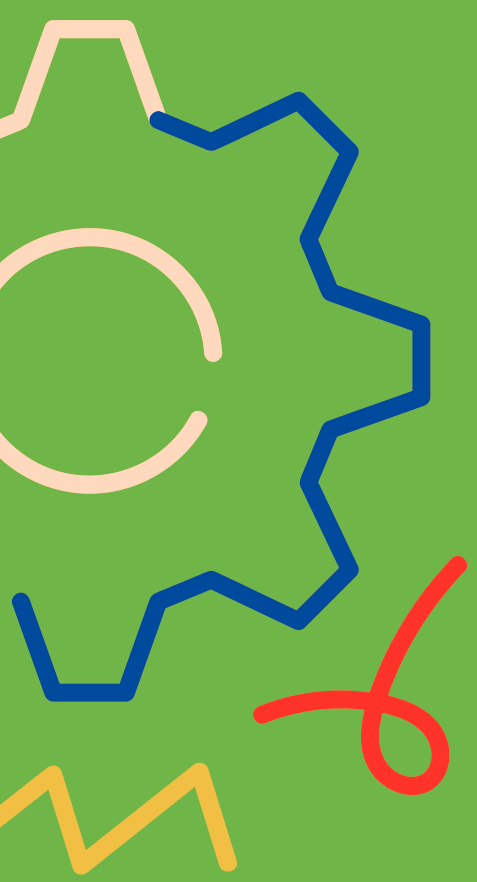- Do what you say you will do.

Promote change:

- Get early adopters onboard to promote change.
- Establish visible decision-making processes.

Share success:

- Have a positive shout-at at weekly briefings.
- Share learnings across schools.

This is important because:

We can't prioritise everything:

- We need time to do it **well**.
- We want to **prevent burnout**.
- Implementing wellbeing is a challenge when we have little time.
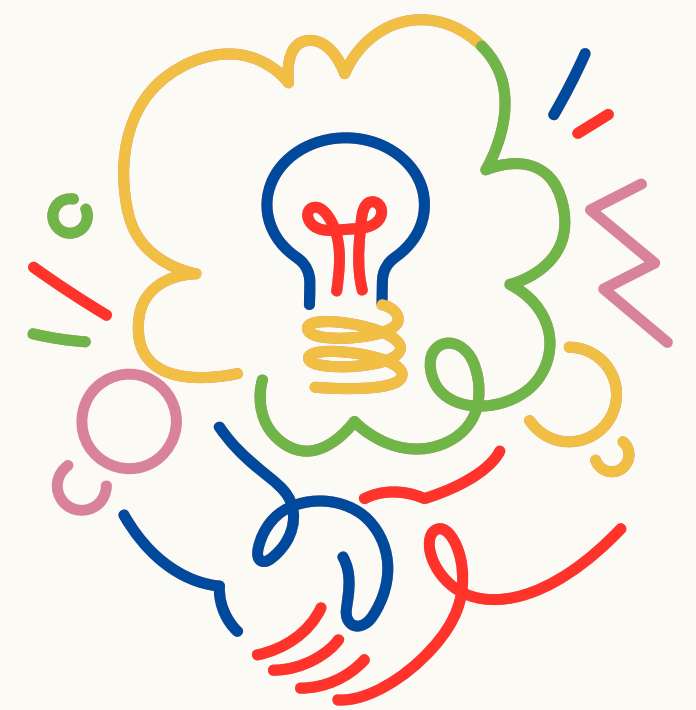
Barriers experienced are:

Personal pressure:

- We have high expectations of ourselves.
- Personal wellbeing is not prioritised ('others first' mindset).

Societal pressure

- Parent demands of our time.
- Now teaching skills previously taught at home.

Systemic pressure:

- Competing demands: academic vs. wellbeing.
- Overloaded curriculum and school performance pressure.
- Difference in expectations between leaders and staff (both ways).

Practical solutions include:

Time is a precious resource:

- Schedule time for wellbeing.
- Allow time for reflection.
- Hold staff meetings only when needed.
- Quarantine time e.g. booking time out for personal life.
- Give time: end of year days.

Creating time through action:

- Clearly communicate at start of year (expectations) and reinforce with Staff, Students and Parents.
- Establish clearly defined roles, expectations, processes.
- Set goals for personal wellbeing and include it in growth plan.
- Share how you best operate e.g. early bird vs night owl.
- Measure wellbeing, absenteeism, retention and take action.

Sharing knowledge and building understanding:

- Hold workshops for teachers.
- Build capacity of staff in wellbeing science.
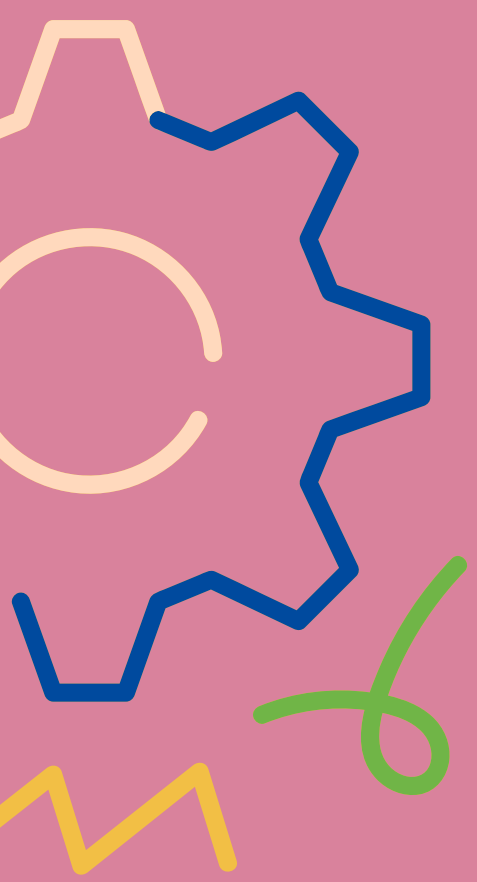
This is important because:

They enable:
- Systematised funding.
- Whole school approach.
- Sustainable, long-term approach.
- Alignment to school's values and purpose.

To drive positive outcomes:
- Clarity, consistency and predictability.
- Human-centred, for everyone, reducing conflict.
- Reduced mental load, less noise, increased efficiency.
- Increased staff and student wellbeing = better community.
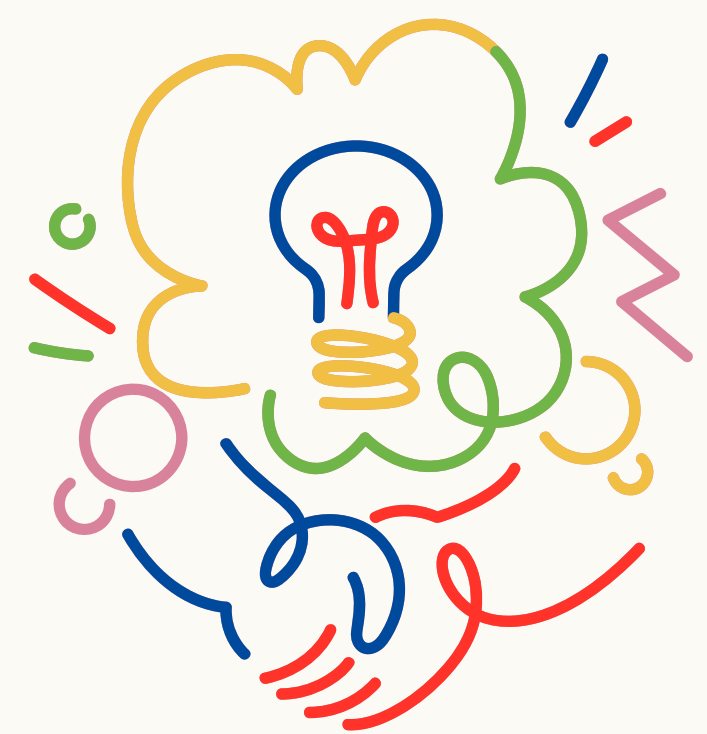
Barriers experienced are:

Theme:
- Lack of established policy and procedure to support staff.
- Leadership don't understand the demands they place on us.
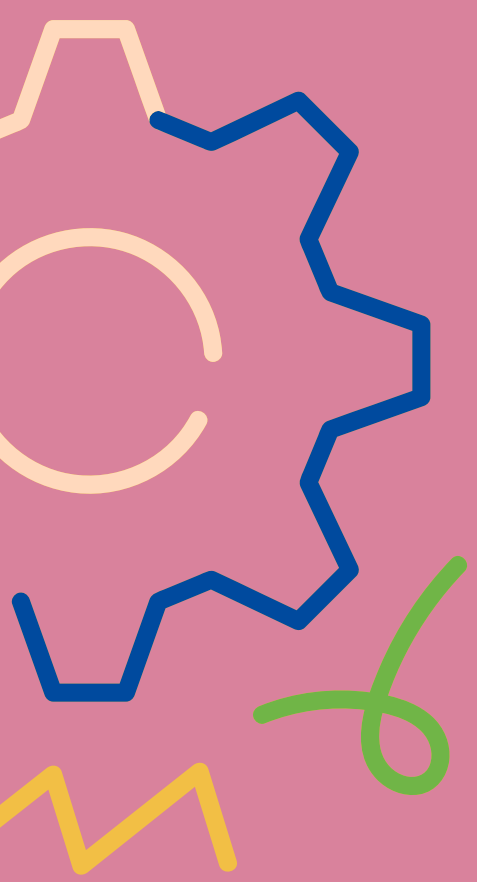
Practical solutions include:

Whole School Approach:
- Develop a whole school wellbeing framework, that:
  - Is proactive, responsive and reparative.
  - Enmeshes multiple frameworks in a holistic approach.
  - Aligns to school values and purpose.
- Link to other strategic school plans.

Promote clarity:
- Define roles and responsibilities for individuals and collectively.
- Establish rituals for consistent communication.
- Evidence for funding.
- Showcase community support and outcomes.
- Collect evidence: funding letters, testimonials, statements.

This is important because:

Harm comes from **neglect:**
- Teacher wellbeing is overlooked.
- We are experiencing secondary trauma.
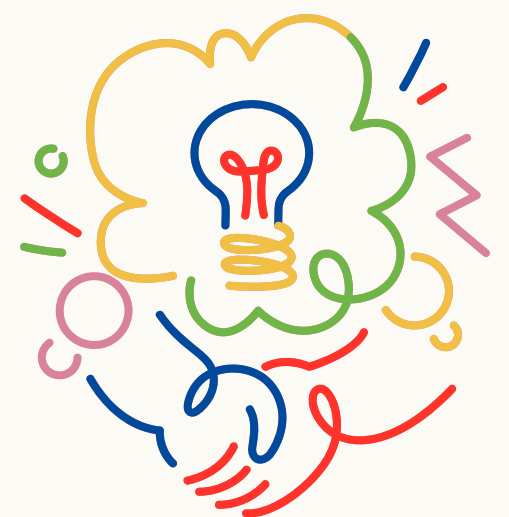
Barriers experienced are:

Value:
- Teachers feel undervalued even though they are creating better humans.

Unrealistic standards:
- Perception that we have to be perfect and know it all.
- Admit that you are human (with faults).

Insufficient training:
- We are not taught skills for handling trauma.
- Leadership don't understand the demands they place on us.

Practical solutions include:

Acknowledgement:
- Leadership acknowledging the challenge.
- Training: mandatory training hours devoted to wellbeing.
- All staff need to be involved in wellbeing activities – not just teachers, but leadership, and administration staff too.
- Spotlight on what is working well in other schools.

Physical presence:
- Being physically available.
- Opportunities for personal connection.
- Walk & talk.
- Shared resources.
- Wellbeing table e.g. unwanted gifts, books, etc.
- Quiet table in the staff room.
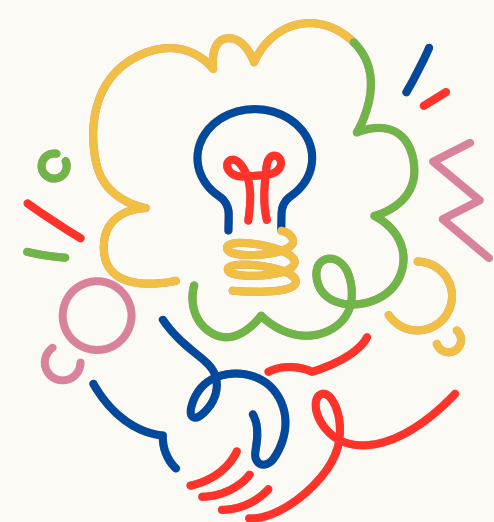- Sensory deprivation station.

To reimagine wellbeing for educators you need to:

OPTIMISE TIME

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This is important because:

We want to do a good job:
- We need time to complete our job properly and take our own wellbeing into account.
- Lack of time/ not enough time means we are not flexible.

Barriers experienced are:

Misaligned expectations:
- Staff/ colleague expectations.
- Parent expectations.

Teaching challenges:
- Changing curriculum.
- Interruptions.
- Reporting requirements.

Daily struggle:
- Without enough time, it feels never ending and unsustainable.

Practical solutions include:

Time preservation:
- Timetable in 'sacrosanct' time.
- Smarter timetabling.
- Structured work hours (communicate hours in signature).

Time-saving options:
- Do we really need that meeting?
- Record meetings for offline consumption.
- Share messages in different ways.
- Lecture style delivery for team teaching.
- AI for reporting.
- Simplified reporting.

Managing expectations:
- Parent Code of Conduct.
- Push back on parents, refer to policy.

ATTENDANCE

This is important because:

Simply:
- If they are not here, we can't help them.

Barriers experienced are:

Family/Home:
- Parenting, Homelessness.

Individual:
- Anxiety, Health, Apathy, Disengagement, Learning needs, Avoidance, Lack of Resilience.

Social:
- Lack of Connection, Bullying, Social complexities, Lack of Belonging.

School:
- Rules/Structures, Uniform, Consistency of Learning.

Practical solutions include:

Programs Aligned to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:
- Breakfast club.
- Regulation space.
- Allied health.
- Social skills programs.

Home Connection:
- Digital learning platform to support communication with home.
- Home visits / parent support.

Wider Support:
- Support networks / parent support.
- External services.

Structure:
- Internal planning / consistency.
- Flexible timetables.
- Sustainable processes.
- Attendance policy.
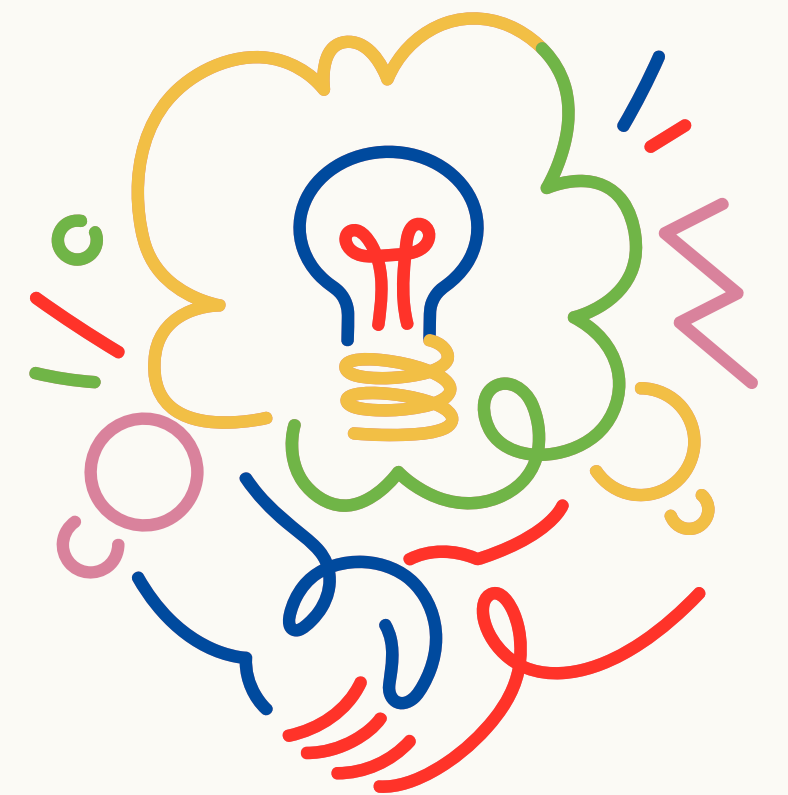
FRIENDSHIP

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This is important because:

It helps students to:
- Build self-esteem and foster a sense of belonging.
- Develop social skills and navigate unhealthy or challenging relationships.

Which supports school/ teachers through:
- Greater attendance and positive impacts to learning.

Barriers experienced are:

Self:
- Low self-esteem and lack of resilience.
- Neurodiversity and/ or mental health challenges.
- Reduced capacity/ skills to self-regulate and problem solve.

Family and community:
- Low parental involvement and connection.
- Lack of good role models for social skills.
- Lack of shared language and sense of community.
- Less free play time leads to lack of organic conflict resolution through play.
- Social norms and cultural differences.

Practical solutions include:

Play:
- Provide outdoor play spaces and equipment.
- Practise 'Play-Talk-Dig' and outdoor 'Brain Breaks'.
- Organise lunch house-based activities and PE.
- Hold Friday Fun Day dances and provide gym access.

Role modelling:
- Vertical lessons – older students teaching younger students.
- Walk and talk facilitated by Yr 12
- Use student voice to design and build.

Broader approaches include:
- School wide system for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and resilience programs.
- Early intervention.
- Parent education.
- Provide translators and practise cultural awareness.

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This is important because:

Resilience Builds Confidence:

- Resilience is empowering... it helps students to confront challenges and experience more of life's opportunities.
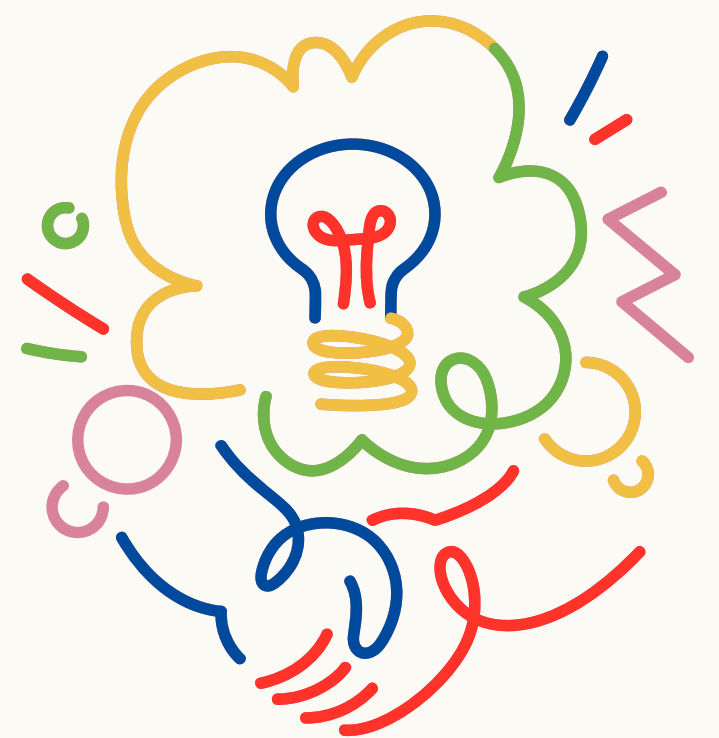
Barriers experienced are:

Societal Expectations:

- Pressure/ expectation to be the best instantly.
- Trend towards instant gratification.
- Focus on tests/ too much value placed on product over process.
- Pressure to be exceptional, uncomfortable being 'ordinary'.
- Children are provided answers/solutions too quickly.
- Social media expectation to always be happy/perfect.
- People rescue children from discomfort.

Family:

- Issues in family life.
- Pressure from parents and lack of support.

Practical solutions include:
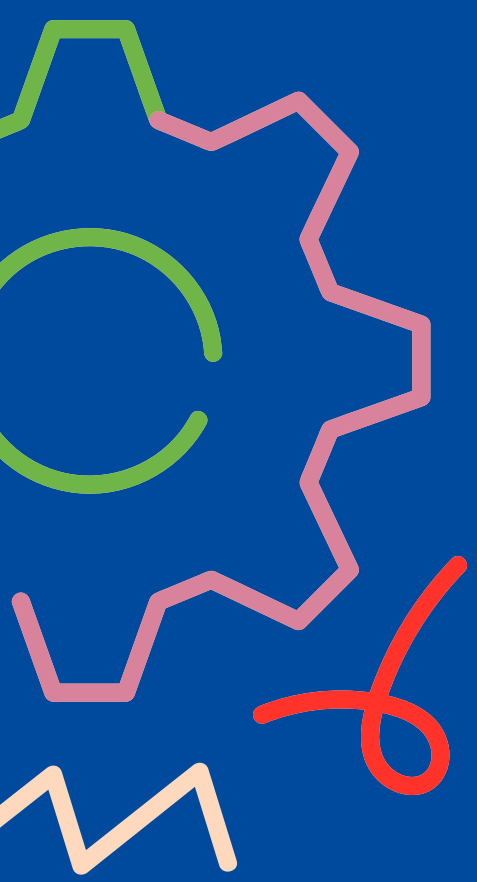
For Home:

- Workshops for parents.

In the Classroom:

- Allowing a student to sit with the struggle.
- Gives students agency around solutions.
- Teach brain chemistry – dopamine release for achievement.
- Explicit teaching of mindsets (resilience, growth etc.).
- Create a safe place where it's okay to fail.

Around the School:

- Incorporate importance of resilience in school models and value statements and build a common/shared language.
- Model the behaviour.
- Identifying when students have shown resilience.
- Resilience building programs or competitions e.g. Operation Flinders.

TECH OVERUSE / ADDICTION

This is important because:

Personal Health Implications:
- Students are getting less sleep and cannot focus.
- Decreases their wellbeing and impacts their mental health.
- Students don't have a sense of purpose or worth when they have an unhealthy relationship with technology.
- It is impairing their cognitive development.
- There is a lack of ability to self-regulate and increasing anxiety and depression in young people.

Social Implications:
- Students are losing in-person connection with peers.

Poor Learning Outcomes:
- Negative impacts on learning.
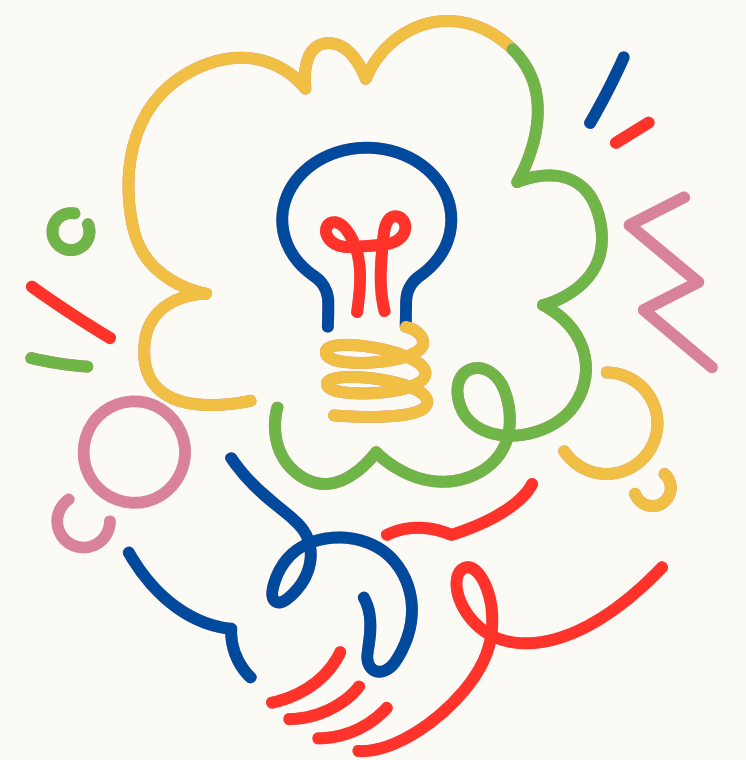
Barriers experienced are:

It's Still Early Days:
- Tech companies are targeting our children.
- Consequences for phone use don't align with addiction treatment.

Practical solutions include:

Education:
- Educate students on the importance of sleep.
- Paired workshops for parents and students.
- Education on language i.e. using 'overuse' instead of 'addiction'
- Education on the neuroscience behind overuse – why social media and games are addictive, how users are baited and hooked.
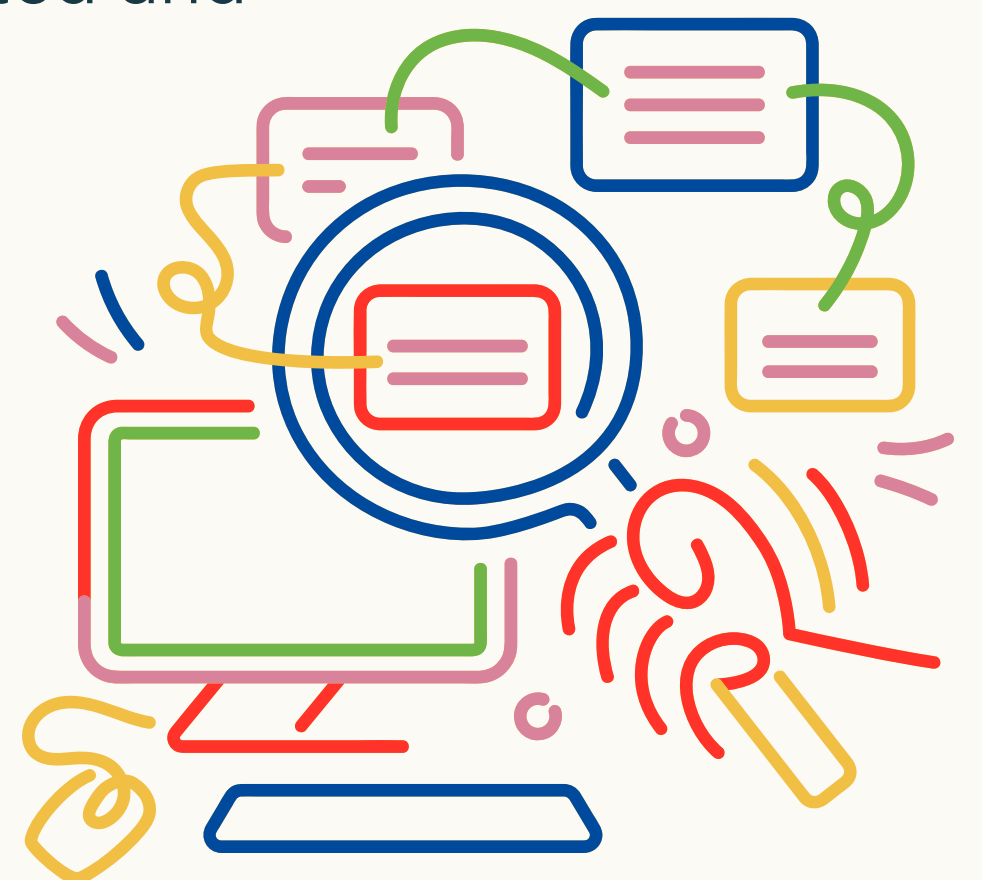
Approaches:
- Establish device-free spaces.
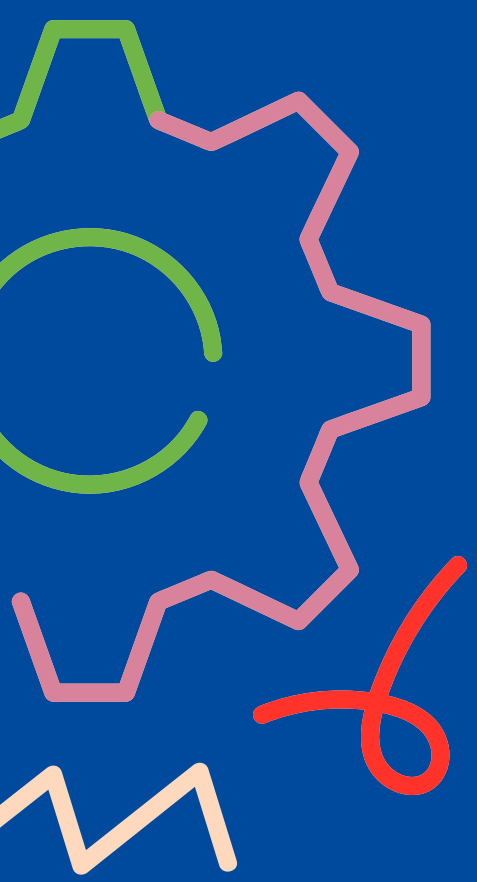- Apply screen limits in the classroom.

Activities:
- Rites of passages.

Resources:
- eSafety Commissioner resources.
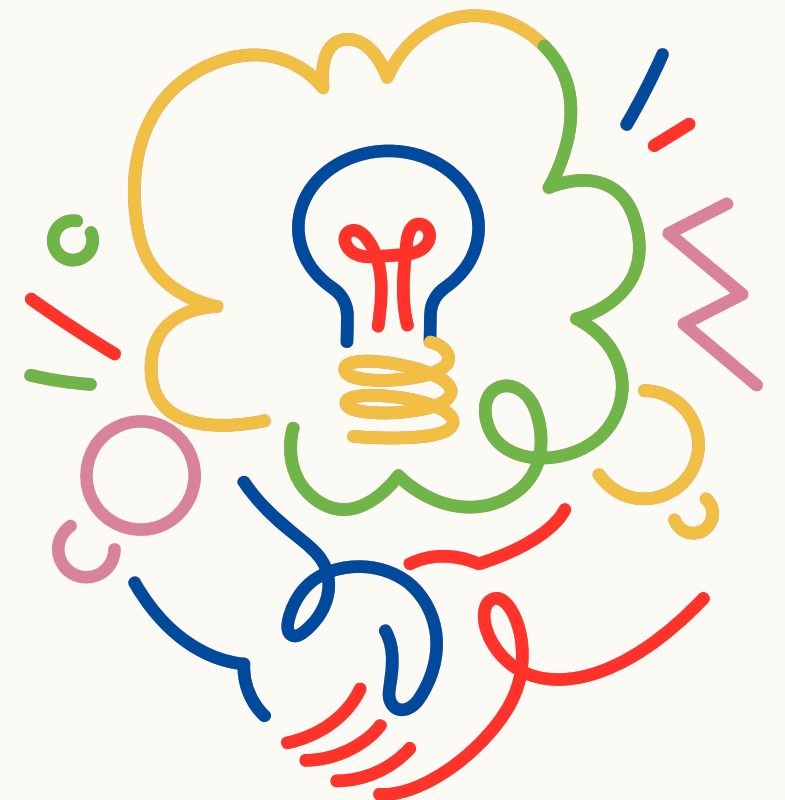
To create healthy relationships with technology you need:

STUDENTS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES

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This is important because:

If they cannot, they:

- Lose their ability to problem solve and communicate.
- Do not have core skills for learning.
- Lack ability to consider multiple perspectives.
- Struggle to take calculated risk.
- Lose their self-confidence.
- Cannot think critically to tell fact from fiction.
- Suffer from information overload.
- Have difficulty understanding right from wrong.
- Lose their curiosity.
- Do not have capacity to respectfully debate different opinions.
- Have higher reliance on external validation.
- Have reduced intrinsic motivation to learn deeply.
- Develop close-mindedness and limit their own opportunities.

Practical solutions include:

Promote Conversation:

- Less screen time and more discussion in classroom.
- Purposeful creation of tasks that generate conversation.
- Discuss student's AI usage with them.
- Ask 'un-Googleable' questions, to draw from personal experience.

Foster Critical Thinking:

- Critical analysis of AI-generated texts (e.g. Yr 10 poetry).
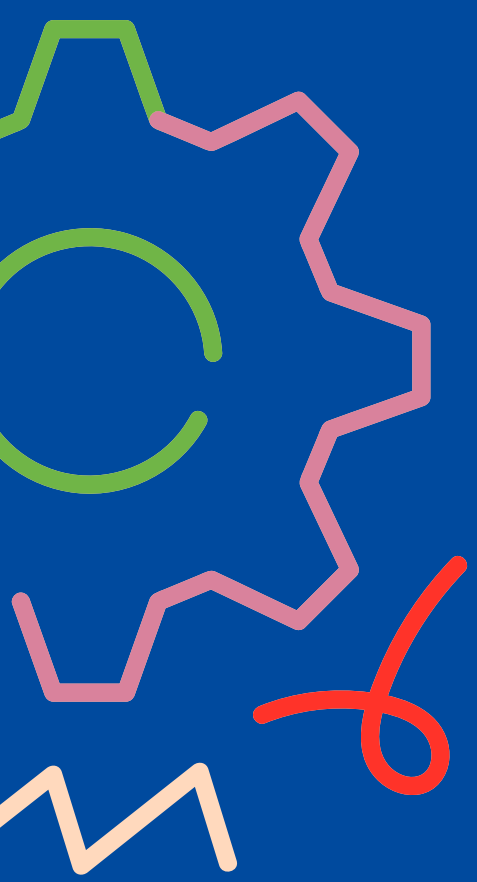- Stimulate, utilise and expose diverse and critical thinking.

Establish Guardrails:

- Guidelines for AI usage.
- Traffic light system for AI usage.
- Use locked-down devices for assignments.

Educate Formally:

- Establish a cyber-safety curriculum.
- Education on ethical use of AI tools.
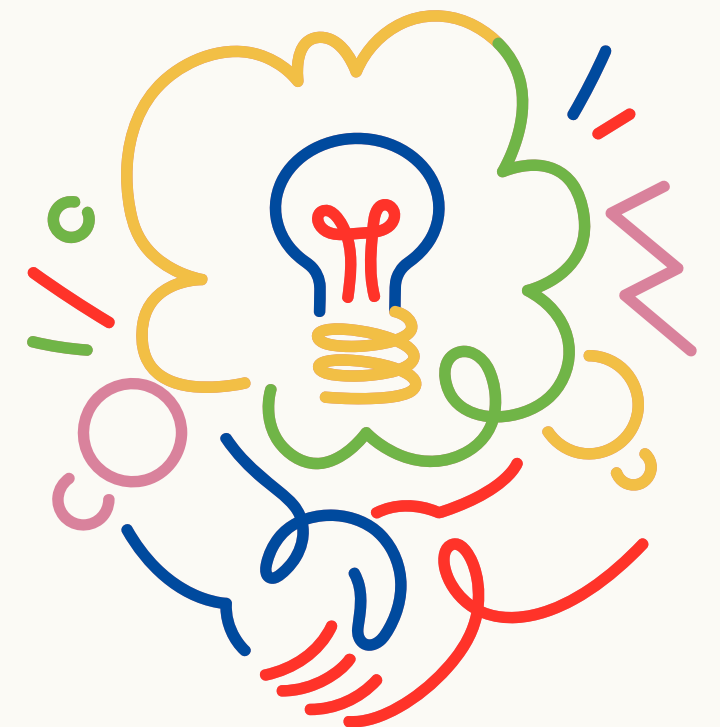
CYBER SAFETY

This is important because:

Compassion:
- We want our students to be safe online, we care about them.

Lifelong Impacts:
- Online decisions can have serious, lifelong impacts.
- Their is potential for negative impact on their career.
- Information online is there forever, it can't be taken back.
- Impacts from exposure to toxic content.

Barriers experienced are:

Poor Judgement:
- Young students struggle to be critical of online content.
- Children have an under-developed sense of right vs wrong, and/or cannot yet trust their gut feeling.

Low Support:
- The need to educate parents and work with them to enforce online safety.

Practical solutions include:

Device Level Prevention:
- Locked-down devices issued by the school.

Education:
- Educate parents on cyber safety.
- Police Liaison Officer talks.
- Cyber safety curriculum.

Enforcement of Policy and Law:
- Clear school policy on responding to cyber threats.
- Know the law and support families to take action.

Disclaimer

The insights and suggestions presented in this document were contributed by delegates of the PESA 2025 National Wellbeing Education Conference, drawing from their lived experiences as educators. These ideas reflect practitioner perspectives and have not been formally evaluated or endorsed by PESA as evidence-based solutions. Readers are encouraged to approach any recommendations with discernment, acknowledging that an established evidence base is not yet in place.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to these ideas. Together, we support each other to improve the wellbeing of our education communities.

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