

Introduction



As readers explore the Fall 2017 publication of the International Journal of the Whole Child, they quickly realize issues related to best practices represent a global context. Whether you are a teacher in Tanzania, a practitioner in the United States, or an early childhood educator in Saudi Arabia, teachers share the desire to maximize learning experiences on behalf of their children. In order to achieve holistic instruction and transformative thinking, we, as their teachers, read and reflect to enrich our intellect, expand and innovate our instruction, and heighten our awareness to dignify what it truly means to be a child; we acknowledge the culture of childhood. In this issue, readers consider the roles of the teacher as well as examine the relationship between instructional alternatives and transformative thinking. In order to achieve this goal, IJWC provides readers with different publication venues.

Initially, IJWC describes the relationship between educational and theoretical underpinnings and holistic and appropriate practices. Next, Pictures for Reflection underscores the importance of following through with holistic learning for, not only our young children, but as well for our elementary and adolescent learners. New to our spring 2017 issue, the subsequent section, entitled “Tech Talk,” identifies several technologies that support students with disabilities. Finally, in ETC., a straightforward argument is made for the importance of children’s sand play. With respect to the ETC. section, readers ask, “Why this most unusual title for this section?” Thank you for this question. The answer is that one of the IJWC goals is not to be a typical journal targeting a particular audience. IJWC intends to provide relevance for a range of readers and to do so in a variety of publication alternatives. The ETC. section highlights what developmentally appropriate theory looks and sounds like in the real world. This section may include articles, newsletters, teachers’ lesson plans, video clips, teacher-made brochures or other materials to support practitioners in their classrooms.

Articles

In the first article, “Gender Equity in Diverse Curriculum Content: Views from Primary Teachers in Tanzania,” Jessica Essary and James Hoot believe baseline research describing teacher-beliefs is critical in determining how existing perspectives may influence how gender inequities impact a learner’s social capital in a particular context. Despite increased government efforts on the African continent to prioritize quality education, of the nine out of 10 children who begin primary school, only six will complete their studies and of this number, only three children will achieve mastery in literacy and numeracy skills. In an effort to improve not merely the numbers of children attending school, but as well the quality of instruction, this manuscript provides data identifying Tanzanian teachers’ perceptions of the value of boys and girls studying particular subject matter. The authors believe in order to create gender responsive curriculum, it is not merely teacher training that improves gender equitable practices, but as well it is

critical to acknowledge individual teachers' beliefs, experiences, and backgrounds. The importance of introducing teachers' voices to inform government policy is described. This study identifies how teachers representing a range of geographic locations, SES frameworks, and ethnic diversity, provide insight and reflection regarding their own beliefs associated with subject matter and gender equity.

In the second article, "Teachers' Perspectives on Language Assessment and Effective Strategies for Young English Language Learners in Florida," *Tunde Szecsi, Tara Lashley, Sydney Nelson and Jill Sherman* frame an argument for the critical importance of teachers attaining language assessment literacy. With increased school focus on students' secondary language, the authors describe how language strategies can be productive only when language teachers are "knowledgeable about the assessment, the process of implementation, interpretation of assessment data, and most importantly, the use of these results for further improving education. The authors report their findings describing elementary school teachers' views about the English language learners' (ELLs') program placement assessment, and progress assessment. Interview data explored teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of these assessments and the connection between language assessment and curricular decisions. Classroom observations were also conducted to gain insight into language strategies that teacher-participants used to promote more effective teaching and learning for ELLs. Implications for teachers, teacher educators and school district personnel are described.

In the third article, "Teaching Sustainable Practices as Part of a Holistic Education in the Saudi Context," *Ahlam Alghamdi, James Ernest, and Fatimah Hafiz* discuss how experiences with sand and water can be used to support sustainable environments in Saudi Arabia. Building on the potential of storytelling as an effective instructional strategy, authors describe how children learn the importance of regarding their local environment and discover the relevance of conserving natural resources as an ethical responsibility for their country's future. This article provides readers with a discussion of how quality early childhood practices can support children's critical and transformative thinking. Further, despite the young age of the children, authors illustrate how informed educators can deepen children's regard for their responsibility for time and place in history.

ETC.

In the article, "The Nitty Gritty of Sand Play," *Rebecca Giles and Karyn Tunks* strongly argue for educators revisiting the potential value of allowing children access to sand as a medium for learning and development. They respond to the common complaints when including sand play ("sand is messy," and "sand play leads to misbehavior",) by clarifying several proactive strategies for organization and clean-up. Most importantly, they describe how, as children play in the sand, they naturally integrate and learn about science, mathematics, and language. Children communicate, negotiate, and share; sand play becomes powerful instructional alternative for academic learning, developmental support, and individual growth. After reading this article, readers will be willing and ready to bring sand into the in-and-outdoor classrooms.

Tech Talk

William Burgess, in “Today’s Classroom Accessibility,” discusses current software in order for educators to most appropriately connect students with disabilities with effective technologies. He reminds readers that before considering technology as an instructional alternative, it is critical to respect all students within any population of disability as unique and individual. This means, regardless of impairment, educators take the time to know their students as individuals with particular needs and interests. He provides readers with numerous examples of how technology can support learning for different disabilities. Further, he describes how both typical and atypical students may benefit. This content serves as a platform to motivate and facilitate educators as they seek ways to support their diverse community of learners.

Pictures for Reflection

Take a look at an older child who is thoroughly enjoying group play and a team sport, on Page 41.