

Introduction



This Fall issue provides readers with insight on the implications of cell phone bans in school, the impact of children growing up in digital world, and how school counselors can support AI literacy in rural school districts. Moreover, readers will have the opportunity to explore the outcomes of an eight-grade math acceleration program that is supported MTSS and understand the numerous definitions of play. Lastly, readers will experience the benefits of connecting art and social emotional literacy in an afterschool program and the power of inclusion for middle school students of color and first-generation immigrants. The International Journal of the Whole Child continues to be committed to promoting holistic learning and the development of the whole child.

Article #1:

Predictors and Outcomes of Eighth Grade Math Acceleration in a Florida District

Sara Comella, Garret J. Hall

The authors investigate a math acceleration program that is supported by the diamond multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) model which provides interventions and strategies for academic, behavior, and mental health challenges in a Florida School District. Outcomes are discussed.

Tech Talk

Balancing Benefits and Barriers: Exploring the Impact of School Cellphone Bans on Student Engagement, Well-Being, and Learning

Nancy Caukin

The author examines the benefits and challenges of cell phone bans policies on students, parents, and teachers. Positive outcomes of cell phone bans discussed include students spending more time reading for pleasure, increased physical activity, more free play, and reduced classroom distractions and cyberbullying. On the contrary, cell phone ban policies were challenging because students rely on phones for academic functions such as multifactor authentication for dual enrollment courses and teachers face the strain of enforcing bans. Lastly, some scholars argue that there is insufficient evidence to suggest that banning cell phones will achieve all that is hoped.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics: STEAM

Children Growing Up Digital: Applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to Technology and Play

Jennifer Sullivan

The author investigates the impact of digital technology on childhood development through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and his later bioecological model. As

children grow up immersed in digital environments, their experiences of play, learning, and relationships are increasingly shaped by technology. The author examines how each layer of Bronfenbrenner's model (microsystem to chronosystem) is influenced by digital integration, highlighting both the benefits and risks of "technologized" childhoods. While technology offers opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and inclusion, it also poses challenges to traditional play, social-emotional development, and cultural diversity. Moreover, the author advocates for a balanced approach that preserves essential elements of unstructured, sensory-rich play while embracing the educational and developmental potential of digital tools.

Families and Children: Health and Wellness

From Access to Empowerment: School Counselors Supporting AI Literacy in
Underserved K–8 Communities

Tyreeka Williams, Michael Brooks, Maylee Vazquez, Shirlene Coopwood

The authors examine a strategic plan for K-8 school counselors to promote AI literacy and career readiness among underserved student populations. As AI continues to rapidly transform K-8 education, access to AI literacy resources remains limited for underserved communities in rural areas. The lack of exposure to AI for students will juxtapose the mission and vision of the school counselors' role in adequately preparing students for socio-emotional, academic, and career success, thereby widening existing educational gaps and inequities.

Play: Development, Learning, Therapy

Embedding Mental, Behavioral Health and Social Emotional Literacy Services into an
After Care Program

*Jacob Womack, Jennifer Bearden, Susan. Elswick, Corey Latta, Marissa Gray,
Jerry Watson, Gregory Washington, Bridgette Okunmokon*

The authors discuss emotional literacy and its relationship to the arts. By combining mental health, behavioral health, SEL, and an art program in an aftercare program, children were provided avenues for self-expression, to increase emotional literacy, to process trauma, and to reduce aggressive and depressive symptoms.

Education by the Numbers

Use of AI in Education

Donald Snead

The author discusses AI in K-12 Education. The data details how AI is commonly used and the attitudes that teachers and students have toward AI utilization in K-12 education.

Education: Words and Meanings

Exploring the Term: "Children's Play"

Sandra Stone

The author discusses the various meanings of children's play, the importance of play, and the power of play. Moreover, the author highlights how understanding these various meanings can help families, caregivers, and educators can support the holistic development of children.

Pictures for Reflection

Nature: A Holistic Experience

Kathleen Burriss, Larry Burriss

The authors express the need to incorporate feelings and emotions to holistically experience nature.

Page Turners: Books for Children

Katrina Bartow Jacobs, Carla K. Meyer, Michelle J. Sobolak, Patricia Crawford, Maria Genest

In this article, different children's books are listed with descriptive summaries on each one. The books include: *Almost Underwear: How a Piece of Cloth Traveled from Kitty Hawk to the Moon and Mars*; *And There Was Music*; *Buffalo Fluffalo*; *Luigi the Spider Who Wanted to be a Kitten*; *No More Chairs*; *Orris and Timble: The Beginning*; *A Mischief of Mice*; *Home*.

Emerging Scholars

Beyond Inclusion: A Conceptual Framework for Cultivating Authentic Belonging for Middle School Students of Color and First-Generation Immigrants

Tzu Yu Cheung

For middle school students of color and first-generation immigrants, the author advocates for an understanding of belonging as more than mere inclusion or representation, but rather an active and intentional cultivation of an environment where students' identities are not merely seen, but rather, affirmed as integral to the learning process. Representational Belonging (curriculum and environments), Pedagogical Belonging (instructional practices), and Relational Belonging (teacher-student and peer relationships) are synthesized and implications for practice are discussed.