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REPORT

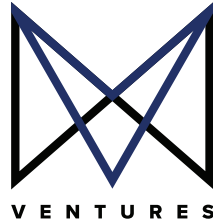
VOL 2

FALL 2023



# TOTAL HEALTH

The Wholeness of People in an Age of Technology



Mount Vernon Ventures is a Transformation R&D Company, an integral part of The Mount Vernon School Organization, based in Atlanta, Georgia. Ventures has a team of industry-recognized experts and practitioners partnering with educators and leaders worldwide to strengthen brand identity, deepen organizational innovation, scale community impact, and build a transformative curriculum.

Mount Vernon Ventures publishes a quarterly Transformation R&D Report, analyzing impactful topics in education for leaders and professionals navigating a complex world. Exploring the drivers, signals, and trends affecting the education sector, we serve schools by conducting extensive research, synthesizing ideas, identifying their implications, amplifying their potential, and providing recommendations for any school to consider.

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First published in 2023 by Mount Vernon Ventures  
A Subsidiary of The Mount Vernon School  
510 Mount Vernon Hwy NE  
Atlanta, GA 30328

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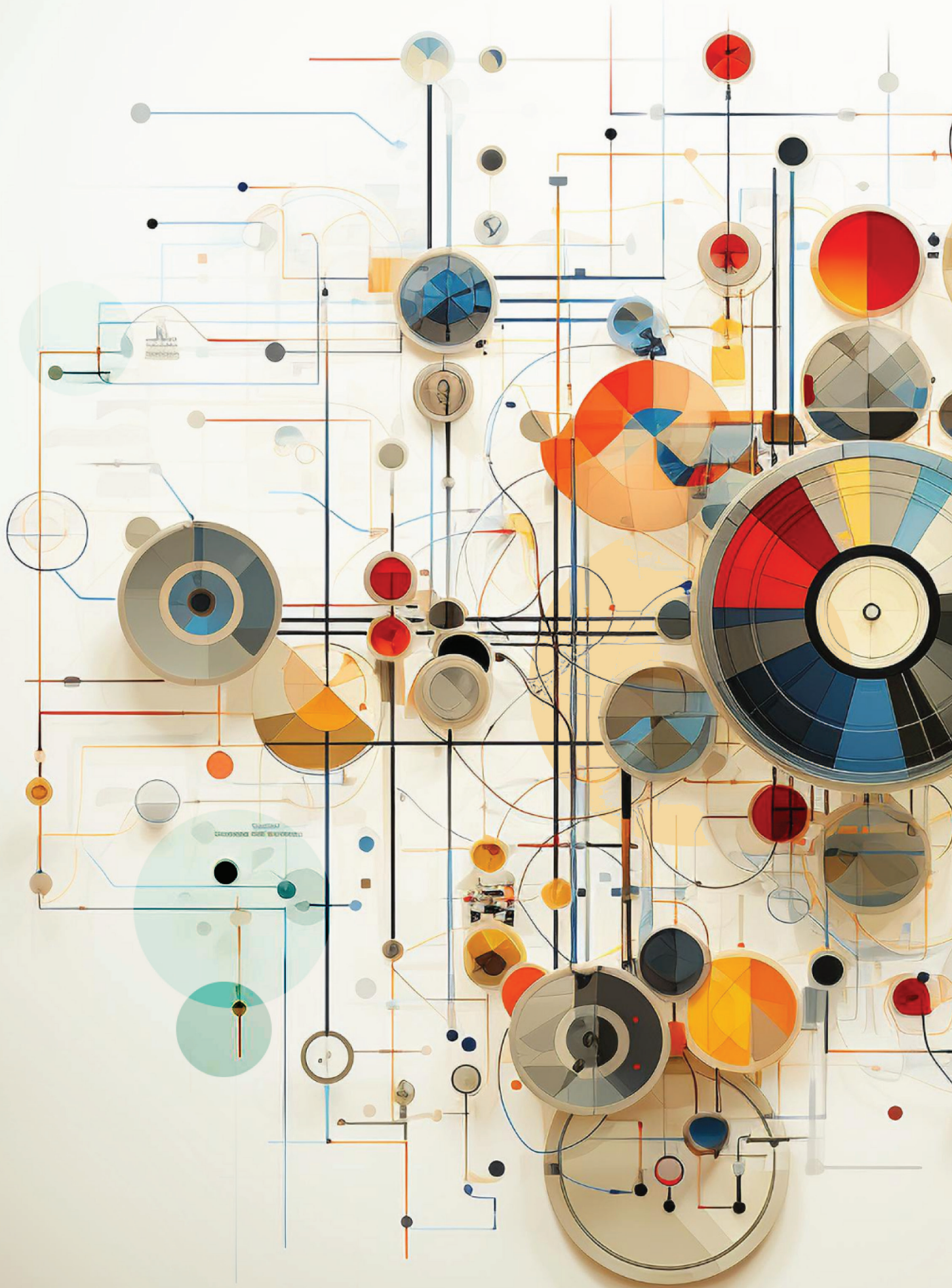
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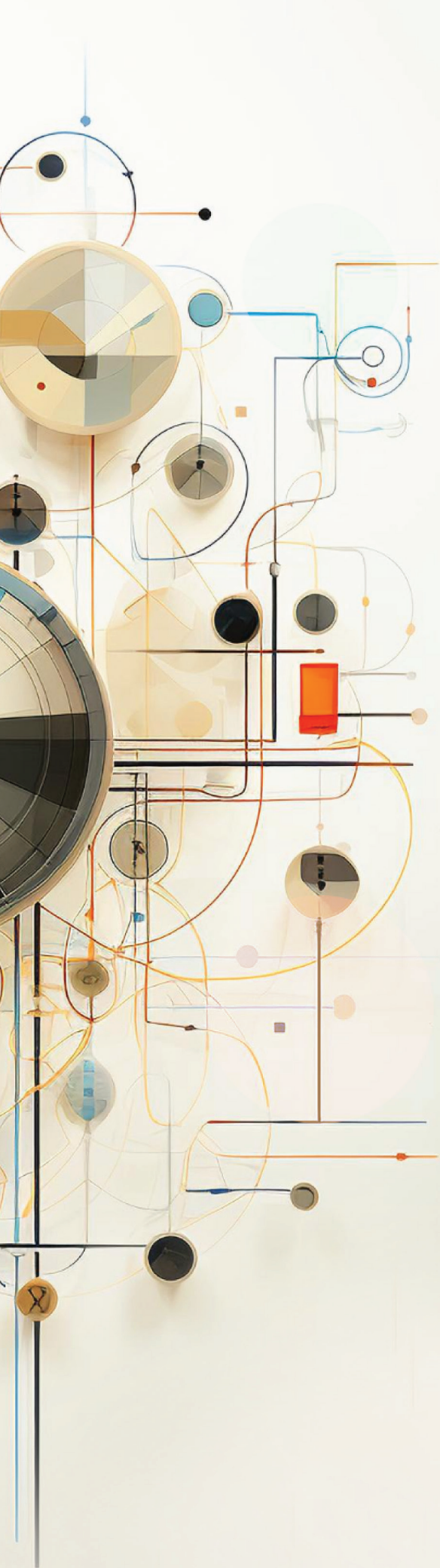
The Wholeness of People in an Age of Technology



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# INTRODUCTION

A community's health and fitness has strong implications for the happiness and effectiveness of an organization. A recent study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* in 2023 found that "physical activity before work is beneficially related to several types of well-being outcomes by increasing challenge appraisal and decreasing threat appraisal."<sup>1</sup> These results are consistent with what early morning runners and weight lifters have intuitively known for a long time: the mental and physical aspects of health are deeply connected. "[What] is good for the body is good for the brain," says Catherine de Lange, editor at *New Scientist* and author of *Brain Power: Everything You Need to Know for a Healthy, Happy Brain*. De Lange adds that, "exercise improves white matter integrity, which helps different parts of the brain speak to one another, allowing people to process information quicker and do better mental gymnastics like multitasking and planning."<sup>2</sup>

Changes in technology, most recently the advancement of artificial intelligence, have garnered widespread discussion in every corner of the web. In an age of increasingly sophisticated technologies, there is certainly much to discuss. However, at times, the emphasis solely on the emerging technologies comes at the expense of discussion about the possibilities for the status of the human body in an age of new and emerging forms of intelligence. In a technocentric world, the human body is often an afterthought. The irony, however, is that limitations in the development of artificially intelligent technology may be due to the fact that these intelligent machines lack a functioning, autonomous body. As one AI expert put it, "Thinking about the complexity and scale of the problem further, a seemingly inescapable conclusion for me is that we may

also need embodiment" if we want AI to develop true intelligence.<sup>3</sup> The body is inextricably linked to intelligence and to our minds, and this kind of total intelligence means when we need to think about the total health of the human learner as well, especially in the age of intelligent machines. With this in mind, how might we reframe the discussion of the human body and its relationship to emerging technologies?

Opportunities for connection between these technologies and health and wellness initiatives in schools are more readily available than ever, and the possibility of fostering the total health of an institution is quickly becoming a reality. The emergence of "health and wellness" as a priority in forward-thinking sectors of the contemporary workplace marks one important development. The availability of personalized and customizable data is of equal significance, as wearable technologies have become ubiquitous among the general population. Yet, the trends go much deeper and the implications stretch much farther than these recent signals of change. The time is ripe for a robust discussion of these connections.

How might we best promote the total health of the human body at the intersection of emerging technologies? What are the latest trends in exercise science/physiology, health and wellness, and organizational collaboration that point to an answer for moving forward? What do these trends and developments mean for us, both in the present moment and in the very near future? When it comes to the human body, the future is indeed bright, but more pointedly, the future will be customizable. The future will be individualized. The future will be fine-tuned to the heartbeat of each individual. What we do to prepare for that future is up to us.