Hip Hop Integration: A Pedagogical Tool for Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine if the elements of Hip Hop culture can be used as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching to enhance student retention and engagement for African American and Latino students in urban areas. Consequently, I'm proposing a teaching method called Hip Hop Integration, which utilizes three teaching strategies: arts integration, cooperative learning, and the theory of multiple intelligences. This study examines how other experts have written about these strategies and how it can relate to Hip Hop culture. Qualitative research methods were conducted to explore educators' perceptions of Hip Hop culture and its use in the classroom. According to the research, most educators believe that Hip Hop culture could positively influence student retention and engagement. In conclusion, Hip Hop Integration can be a viable tool and assist in closing the achievement gap for African American and Latino students.

Keywords: Hip Hop culture, retention, engagement, arts integration, cooperative learning, multiple intelligences

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

The cultural framework of any given civilization is primarily based on the ideas, beliefs and practices of its constituents. Unfortunately, as it pertains to the social, political, and economical systems of the United States of America, there are many disparities when it comes to equal rights and opportunities for minorities due to these facets. Ultimately, this creates racial gaps in what is supposed to be a melting pot of heterogeneous groups who seek better opportunities in a homogeneous society. For instance, in the educational system, African Americans and Latinos are performing at a lower level than Whites. In 1998, Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips gave us some insight on the test score gap specifically between blacks and whites. "African Americans currently score lower than European Americans on vocabulary, reading, and mathematics tests, as well as on tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence" (para. 1). In regards to Latinos, they are only a tad bit better than their Black counterparts. According to Thernstrom (2003), “Just 15 percent of the Latino eighth-graders of 1988 had obtained a four-year college degree by 2000, about the same proportion as for blacks and only half of that for whites” (p. 109). Additionally, they have an alarming dropout rate of 15.1 percent, compared to 8 percent for African Americans and 5.1 percent for Whites. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012) A report from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) gives us a brief

synopsis of the impact that immigration has on the Latino population as well. Thernstrom (2003) mentions, “The average NAEP scores for Hispanics are about as low as those for blacks, but only because the presences of so many low-scoring immigrant children pulls them down” (p. 110). While various races and ethnic backgrounds continue to enter the United States of America, proper adjustments must be made to accommodate their various lifestyles, if we are to close the racial gap in academic performances. As a result, "Reducing the test score gap is probably both necessary and sufficient for substantially reducing racial inequality in educational attainment and earnings (Jencks & Phillips, 1998, para. 4). In other words, “Schooling has become the key to racial equality” (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 2).

Statement of the Problem and Justification for the Study

If there is going to be any kind of educational reform that reduces racial inequality, it must go beyond just test scores. Quite frankly, the assessments only give a glimpse into the intelligence, competency, and proficiency of a particular student. As opposed to standardized test scores, I believe education should be more centered on making direct connections between content and culture in the classroom. Often times, many African Americans and Latinos are not receiving the necessary skills and knowledge to compete against Whites and Asians in the U.S. While there have been previous attempts at educational reform, issues still exist, mainly due to the inability to concentrate on the root of the problem; the systematic oppression of racism. While remnants of the slavery system and Jim Crow Laws have taken an enormous toll on the

progression of Blacks, immigration laws and discrimination are crippling the Latino community. In *A Handbook for Teachers of African American Children*, Baruti K. Kafele (2004) mentions, "in order to develop and maintain this system of enslavement, it was expedient from the vantage point of the slave owners to remove all traces of the African tradition from the minds of the enslaved" (p.11). Education, such as the prohibition of reading, was one of the many tools utilized to oppress the slave population. And even though the Emancipation Proclamation was passed in 1863, the effects of the slavery system still pervade the Black community today. Kafele (2004) explains, "In numerous urban public school classrooms of majority African American student populations throughout the U.S., there is a very noticeable absence of African and African American history…" (p. 11). He continues to declare that; "Many African American students therefore continue to be exposed to a curriculum where their history, culture, experience, perspectives and interests are either marginalized, distorted, or nonexistent" (Kafele, 2004, p. 11). Therefore, it is imperative for educators to put culturally responsive teaching at the core of their teaching if they are to mend some of the issues that exist within the educational system because quite frankly, the United States of America is not a melting pot but rather a tossed salad that consists of various distinct cultures that could all contribute to the greater whole.

According to Geneva Gay (2000), "culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of culturally diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29). By incorporating culturally responsive

teaching, along with nuances of Hip Hop elements, educators would place "culture at the center of the analysis of techniques for improving the performance of underachieving students of color" (Gay, 2000, pp. 9 - 10). As educators, it is our duty to bring out what is already there and to guide students in making direct connections to the curriculum. One of the first things educators must educe is the prior knowledge that the students possess. This knowledge is primarily based on a student's environment and culture. Therefore, it is imperative for educators to consider the culture of their students and create a classroom environment that values their knowledge, as well as, their experiences. By incorporating culturally responsive teaching into the classroom, the students would be able to make direct connections between content and culture and have the capabilities of establishing effective solutions to problems inside and outside of the classroom. According to Concha Delgado-Gaiten and Henry Trueba (1991), culture is comprised of a "dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, world views, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others" (as cited in Gay, 2000, p. 8). Cultural knowledge is usually attainable by observations and experiences a person may have had in a particular environment. In essence, this becomes a pivotal part in the learning process.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the potential impact Hip Hop culture can make on the academic performances amongst African American and Latino students if it was utilized as a culturally responsive teaching method. Furthermore, this

study will explore ways to enhance both retention and engagement in the classroom for students in urban areas. So, why should we as educators consider using Hip Hop culture as a pedagogical tool? Well, the "enduring quality, accessibility, rich history, and universal acceptance of Hip Hop culture among youth renders it as a powerful pedagogical curriculum tool across subject areas for educators to utilize" (Hip Hop Association, 2005). Although its inception can be traced back in the early 1970s, it still remains a popular form of expression amongst today's youth. It's comprised of elements such as: rapping, b-boying or breakdancing, graffiti art, and deejaying[1]. I believe that all of these elements can be utilized as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching through arts integration, cooperative learning techniques, and the theory of multiple intelligences. I call this methodology, Hip Hop Integration. Hip Hop Integration provides a culturally responsive environment that I feel will be an effective way for the students to learn. Unfortunately, there are many negative perceptions of this particular culture. The media is to be partially blamed for this. As Akil Kennedy (2005) of the "Journal of Hip Hop" mentions:

> It's a wonder Hip Hop culture could become the most profitable marketing entity in the world, yet people still argue it has no educational value. Many educators resist Hip-Hop as a teaching tool due to ignorance, convinced Hip-Hop is what they see on TV and hear on the radio. Hip Hop, as a culture has many dimensions. It should not be critiqued on a single plane (p. 101). The dynamics of this movement are based on the engagement of the

[1] See Literature Review section for definitions of each element.

youth. As a result, educators should take this culture into consideration when developing lessons. Kennedy strongly suggests, "It is time for educators to embrace Hip-Hop as a valuable asset in the classroom" (p. 101). Rapper, actor, and activist Mos Def, also known as Yasiin Bey, comments:

> I mean, Hip Hop could be phenomenal. Hip Hop's relationship to education could be phenomenal. It could be extremely phenomenal, in the sense that Hip Hop is a medium where you can get a lot of information into a very small space. And make it hold fast to people's memory. It's just a very radical form of information transferal (as cited in Alim, 2006, p. 31).

By organizing the curriculum and designing lessons and activities that spark the students' interests, I believe the students will be more receptive to what the teacher is teaching. Furthermore, they will see some value in their education and how it applies to their daily lives. Ideally, my aim is to make the learning process fun and engaging. I want the students to be excited about learning. The experiences that I have had, and continue to have, as an educator, proclaim that lessons and activities that included performance and fine arts were highly effective. By implementing Hip Hop Integration, I have witnessed a student who had a stuttering problem have the ability to "freestyle," an improvisational form of rapping, without stumbling over words. I have witnessed the creativity of a quiet student emerge when given a drawing assignment involving graffiti art. I have also helped a young, creative and energetic middle school

student find his own voice through music production. The possibilities are endless.

Glossary of Terms

Hip Hop – A cultural movement developed in the 1970s in Bronx, New York by young African Americans and Latinos that is comprised of four core elements: rapping, b-boying or breakdancing, graffiti, and deejaying.

Rapping – The oral tradition of Hip Hop culture which involves the use of syncopated rhyme schemes.

B-boying – Also known as breakdancing, b-boying is the dance tradition of Hip Hop culture that includes a multitude of dance moves, such as: top rocking, footwork, power moves and freezes.

Graffiti – The visual tradition of Hip Hop culture that involves illustrations on trains and walls, usually painted by aerosol spray cans and markers.

Deejaying – The music tradition of Hip Hop culture that involves the mixing and manipulation of vinyl records played on two turntables.

Hip Hop Integration - A pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching that utilizes the elements of Hip Hop culture with arts integration, cooperative learning, and the theory of multiple intelligences.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide pertinent information regarding Hip Hop culture, including its historical background and the elements that exist within this global phenomenon. Furthermore, I intend to justify its relevance by exploring these elements and how they can be integrated in the classroom to enhance retention and engagement, primarily for African American and Latino students who attend schools located in urban areas. The objective is to investigate how Hip Hop culture can be utilized as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching by examining various teaching methods, which include: arts integration, cooperative learning and the theory of multiple intelligences.

Hip Hop can be defined as a cultural movement which encompasses a variety of artistic expressions that reflect the attitudes, belief systems, language and behavioral patterns of its practitioners and observers. It serves as an avant-garde for innovation and experimentation, yet it relies heavily on the existence of previous representations of art forms, which include: music, dance, poetry, and visual art, to name a few. Philosopher, activist, lecturer, emcee, and author of *The Gospel of Hip Hop,* KRS ONE (2009) states, "Hip Hop is born of cultural syncretism, meaning the blending of different cultures to create a new culture" (p. 81). Although it may be considered

primarily based on African American and Latino culture (Rivera, 2003), Hip Hop has grown to be the world's leading youth culture (Higgins, 2009). The shared experiences of marginalization, alienation (Emdin, 2010) and rebelliousness became an integral part of collective understanding amongst the youth. As a result, the underlying theme of cultural relevance became the driving force for artistic expression and has allowed Hip Hop culture to be universally accepted all over the world. Yet, there also exists a vast array of interpretations regarding the matter. For instance, Hip Hop can be viewed as a form of music, a collection of four elements (MCing or rapping, DJing, graffiti, and breaking), a cultural expression (slang, fashion, music, marketing, art, the ethos, etc), or a way of life (Tanz, 2007, ix). Others may view it as more of a political force (Watkins, 2005). I personally tend to view it as a continuation of previous artistic movements deeply rooted in African traditionalism, which embraces the concept of using art as a functional tool for mental, physical, and spiritual cultivation. However, just like any other tool, it has the capability to either build or destroy, depending on the intentions and perspectives of the user.

Historical Background of Hip Hop Culture

Descendants of the African Diaspora, who have survived under various systems of oppression for hundreds of years, have overcome tremendous amounts of obstacles by establishing cultural movements that reflect the traditional elements of their birthplaces. James N. Kariuki (2007) writes, the African Diaspora includes "all Africans living outside the continent" (para. 1) and "refers to the historic Diaspora whose

establishment started in the 17th century with the forceful capture and transfer of able-bodied Africans to the Americas, Europe and the Middle East" (Kariuki, 2007, para. 2). He continues, "In the Americas, the cultural base for the African Diaspora became the Caribbean, Central and South Americas" (Kariuki, 2007, para. 3). Inevitably, as time persisted, these descendants found ways to carry their cultural expressions with them. In *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective*, Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price (1976) state:

> Enslaved Africans…were drawn from different parts of the African continent, from numerous ethnic and linguistic groups, and from different societies in any region. Some scholars have claimed…that they shared a certain number of underlying cultural understandings and assumptions, insofar as their societies were related to one another, both historically and by virtue of intense contact (p. 2).

Hip Hop culture manifested itself out of a state of oppression yet makes references to African aesthetics. During slavery, for example, Africans were not able to participate in ritualistic practices that reflected their own culture. As a result, certain practices were expressed through song and dance, often times using coded languages and behaviors that were analogous to their original customs prior to coming to America and the West Indies. As Leroi Jones, also known as, Amiri Baraka (1963) puts it, "These nonmaterial aspects of the African's culture were almost impossible to eradicate. And these are the most apparent legacies of the African past, even to the contemporary black

American" (p. 16). For instance, Africans who were enslaved and forced to work in the fields would often times sing chants and litanies as they were laboring. This is reminiscent of songs that were common in West Africa although it was quite different working on one's own land, as oppose to, a foreign land (Jones, 1963). Consequently, the cultural references shifted to subject matters that were influenced by these circumstances. Thus, Hip Hop culture, much like these Negro Spirituals, the Blues, Jazz, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Black Arts Movement, emerged from a dire need for creative expression and intellectual freedom during turbulent times. These movements became voices for the voiceless and "brought America a new language of rhythm, speech, and movement that has inspired a generation to take a verse to say what was too long unspoken about this nation" (George, 1998, xiii). Some of the issues that were being communicated included, but not limited to: racism, discrimination, and poverty.

In the book, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation,* Jeff Chang (2005) gives a detailed account of the impoverished living conditions of young African Americans and Latinos in the borough of the Bronx, New York, which is considered the birthplace of Hip Hop. These conditions are primarily attributed to the Cross-Bronx Expressway. In 1953, Robert Moses, an urban builder in New York began planning to build the Cross-Bronx Expressway that would make Manhattan the center for business and wealth. It "would allow people to traverse the Bronx from the suburbs of New Jersey through upper Manhattan to the suburbs of Queens in fifteen minutes" (Chang, 2005, p. 11). Over 60,000 Bronx residents were caught in the middle of the Expressway. As a result, Blacks and Latinos were forced to relocate and live in public

housing in boroughs, such as Brooklyn and South Bronx. These apartment buildings would eventually be destroyed. At times, tenants would deliberately destroy an apartment complex for personal gains. Chang (2005) explains, "Apartment buildings passed into the hands of slumlords, who soon figured out that they could make more money by refusing to provide heat and water to the tenants, withholding property taxes from the city, and finally destroying the building for insurance money" (p. 13). In addition to the unfortunate living conditions that plagued the residents in these parts of Bronx, the unemployment increased at an astonishing rate. This, along with the constant influx of new residents, caused an increase of gang related activity, which at first, was a defense mechanism for African Americans and Latinos against White youth gangs, but eventually became a tool for power and territory. Nelson George, author of *Hip Hop America* and *Post-Soul Nation* adds, "Much as the lawlessness of the Prohibition era aided the development of jazz, the lackadaisical criminal enforcement policies of the '70s encouraged the experimentation that was eventually organized into the hip-hop industry" (as cited in Fricke and Ahearn, 2002, viiii). Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn (2002) further explain:

> Hip-hop culture rose out of the gang-dominated street culture, and aspects of the gangs are still defining features of hip-hop – particularly territorialism and the tradition of battling. As hip-hop grew in the 70s, prominent DJs claimed specific territories as their own, and 'crews' that derived either directly or in spirit from street gangs guarded the DJs, their

> equipment, and their territories. These DJs would battle for supremacy and territory (p. 3).

Some of these DJs, who are considered the founding fathers of Hip Hop, include: DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash. DJ Kool Herc, a Jamaican immigrant, would loop the instrumental breaks, or syncopated rhythms, of vinyl records to create a distinctive sound that appealed to his peers at house parties. He referred to this style as "the Merry-Go-Round" (Chang, 2005, p. 79). Soon, the parties were so popular that he had to start hosting block parties, which were parties in the park, outside of the apartment buildings. By doing this, other ethnic groups were exposed to the music and culture. Afrika Bambaataa, a former gang member of the Black Spades, was heavily inspired by Herc's music and played a major role in acknowledging Hip Hop as a solidified culture by re-emphasizing the connection between, what is now known as, the four core elements. In 1974, he founded the Universal Zulu Nation, which is "a collective of DJs, breakers, graffiti artist, and homeboys that filled the fraternal role gangs played in urban culture while de-emphasizing crime and fight" (George, 1998, p. 18). Finally, Grandmaster Flash contributed to the innovativeness and creativity of deejaying by developing techniques, such as: "punch phrasing", "break spinning", and the "clock theory" (George, 1998). These three DJs influenced the Hip Hop sound and brought together young Blacks and Latinos to eliminate the pre-existing violence of street gangs. But while deejaying was the foundation of Hip Hop culture, there are several other elements of Hip Hop that exist. This next section makes reference to these other key

components (b-boying or breakdancing, graffiti and rapping) and explains how they are essential to the development of communication.

The Elements of Hip Hop Culture

B-boying, or breakdancing, was a popular dance style developed by young Blacks and Latinos who were intrigued by the music of the DJs. Its origins, however, can found in cross cultural dance experimentations, which involved a fusion of African and European dance styles which were developed during and after the eighteenth century American slavery (Holman, 2004; Forman & Neal, 2004). Sally Banes (2004) explains, b-boying " began as a kind of game, a friendly contest in which black and Hispanic teenagers outdid one another with outrageous physical contortions, spins, and back flips, wedded to a fluid, syncopated, circling body rock done close to the ground" (as cited in Forman & Neal, p. 13). B-boying single-handedly captured the attention of the media and found itself being featured in movies, such as: *Flashdance*, *Breakin*, and *Beat Street*. It was also included in commercial ads for major corporations like *Coca-Cola* and *Burger King* and news articles included in, the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. It even participated in the closing ceremonies of the 1984 summer Olympics in Los Angeles (Banes 2004; Forman & Neal, 2004).

DJ Kool Herc originated the term "b-boy or break boys" (as cited in George, 2004; Forman & Neal, 2004). He would intentionally play certain parts of the songs that would cause the dancers to get to a "breaking point". At first, the dance was

popularized in the African American community, often adapting moves from James Brown, Fred Astaire, Michael Jackson, etc. However, by the mid-1970s, it slowly faded out. It became revitalized by Puerto Rican teenagers who took the art form to another level by incorporating backspins, headspins, and other acrobatic moves inspired by martial arts films (Higgins, 2009). Some of the better-known groups were the Rock Steady Crew and the New York City Breakers. It should be noted that while b-boying was undoubtedly the most prominent form of dancing during the early years, it was not exclusive to other dance moves that existed during that time. Nevertheless, dancing, in general, played an important role in cultural expression amongst young African American and Latino youth.

Graffiti, on the other hand, is a visual language popularized by street gangs in Philadelphia and New York in the 1960s and 1970s (Chang, 2005) that includes a variety of words, names, symbols, shapes, colors, and illustrations to mark territories and was usually displayed on walls, trains, or buildings. This was primarily executed using aerosol spray paint or markers. Although it may have started with gangs, its origins go back to the human need to document and preserve ideas. Imagery on caves, pyramids, and temples found in historical sites, represented peoples' ways of life and their interpretations of various relationships, i.e. humans and nature, humans and God, humans and other humans, etc. As Nelson George (1998) states, “Graffiti has been around since man encountered his first stone wall” (p. 11). For graffiti writers, in particular, it was all about making a name for themselves. Jeff Chang (2005) stresses that, “They were doing it to be known amongst their peers, to be recognized for their originality, bravado, daring

and style" (p. 74). As a matter of fact, most of the pioneers who were involved with the beginning of Hip Hop culture were predominantly graffiti writers. But while it certainly became a political issue (Castleman, 2004; Forman & Neal, 2004), it also became a legitimized art form that can now be found in art galleries, fashion, advertisements and murals around the world. Beyond just the popularization of this particular art form, it has also contributed to the study of visual culture.

Margaret Dikovitskaya (2005) defines visual culture as a study that "regards the visual image as the focal point in the processes [social, political, and economic] through which meaning is made in a cultural context" (p. 1). This is evident in Sharif Bey's (2012) autoethnographic research study entitled, "Engaging 'Gangland' Visual Culture: Memorializing Beltzhoover's Victims of Violence, 1993-1997", which emphasizes the "visual expression" of graffiti to commemorate deceased gang members in Beltzhoover, Pittsburgh. In this article, he mentions, "This visual culture has emerged in response to social and political repressions, and these expressions are reactions to heightened emotional experiences" (Bey, 2012, p. 97). Given its implications of sentimental value, Bey believes that graffiti could be used to engage students in art education by making references to historical events within a particular community. As a result, spaces filled with graffiti have the potential to be "pedagogical sites" and "platforms for revisiting, sharing, and contesting cultural, political, and historical points of view" (Bey, 2012, p. 109). By acknowledging the environment that prompts graffiti to exist within a specific community, the students and teachers become more informed of the conditions in which it is placed. And while Sharif Bey doesn't necessarily mention

graffiti as an element of Hip Hop culture, its connections are apparent when it comes to the influence of gangs.

Although deejaying, b-boying, and graffiti all played a significant part in the development of Hip Hop culture, rapping became the most notable and recognizable of the four core elements. The origins of rap can be traced back to the *griots* of West Africa, who used to travel to neighboring villages and tell stories using rhythmic speech and drumming. As Jeff Chang (2005) states, "Many compared rappers to *griots* – the mythmakers, genealogists, praise singers, oral historians and social critics of Senegambian society" (p. 275). The first MC, or master of ceremonies, is attributed to Coke La Rock (George, 1998). He accompanied DJ Kool Herc as a toaster, by giving shout-outs, making announcements, introducing a particular record, or reciting poetic verses. Therefore, the relationship between the rapper and DJ was similar to that of the griot and the drums. Regarding the art of rapping, its style eventually evolved to syncopated rhyme schemes displayed and perfected by rappers, such as: Love Bug Starski, Busy Bee, Melle Mel, etc. Today, there are literally millions of rappers, each having their own distinctive sound and delivery.

While there are definitely other aspects of Hip Hop culture that exists, this thesis is focused on these four core elements. While they could be looked upon as separate entities, they are all interconnected. Each element has a specific function yet are expressed interchangeably. For instance, b-boying began as a response to the music provided by the DJ; rapping pioneers began with utterances, announcements, shout outs

and phrases while the deejay played the songs; graffiti provided the visual language of the culture, a form of documentation that expressed the many facets of the inner city life yet mentions the street language conveyed by the rappers. The combination of all these elements can be viewed as basic forms of communication that finds itself relevant to those who understand the language and to others who are fascinated by its connotations. Thus, it has the ability to bridge gaps, whether it is generational, racial, or academic.

Hip Hop Integration

Cultural expression is a vital force of society. It encompasses a collection of ideas and expressions that are fundamental to human survival. With this in mind, culturally responsive teaching has the potential to be highly effective in the classroom since it values the knowledge and experiences of its students. In addition, a community can be built with a specific value system that ultimately shapes human behavior. The classroom setting can be considered a microcosm of this notion, where various individuals are ultimately part of a greater whole. Through this relationship, each person undergoes a learning process that is based on his or her interactions with other classmates. An exchange of ideas takes place and the means by which it will be expressed will rely heavily on the classroom environment. It is important for educators to incorporate culturally responsive teaching methods within their curriculum in order to effectively harness their students' creative energy. As Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) states:

> Teachers who practice culturally relevant methods can be identified by the way they see themselves and others. They see their teaching as an art rather than as a technical skill. They believe that all of their students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some…The help student make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities (p. 25).

As students continue to develop cognitively, behaviorally, and socially, it is important for them to feel as if they have a voice. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that supports these efforts. In *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, & Practice*, Geneva Gay (2000) implies that this teaching method is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory (pp. 29 – 35). It validates the legitimacy of cultural identities because it considers their heritages and traditions, which would be incorporated within the content areas of the curriculum. Additionally, it addresses subject matters from a holistic perspective, as oppose to, addressing subject matter as separate entities. This is accomplished by finding connections between personal knowledge and experiences and how it relates to the material students are learning in the classroom. As a result, culturally responsive teaching is a tool of empowerment because it regards the students as embodiments of these understandings. These understandings are not only cultivated, but are also disseminated and shared amongst others. In essence, it allows the students and teacher to learn from each other. This can bring about a classroom environment that permeates positive transformations that emancipates each individual and strengthens the learning experience.

This particular study explores the elements of Hip Hop culture as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching. Furthermore, it is intended to investigate how these elements could enhance the learning experience of students by actively engaging them in lessons and activities that would also assist them in retaining relevant information. This particular method is referred to as Hip Hop Integration, which includes three teaching strategies: arts integration, cooperative learning, and the theory of multiple intelligences. By utilizing these strategies simultaneously, the students would be in a learning environment that caters to their needs while also appreciating the value of their respective cultures. Additionally, it would assist in developing cognitive, social, and interpersonal skills that would enable them to academically perform at higher levels and provide them with the necessary tools to become successful inside and outside of the classroom.

Retention and Engagement

There seems to be ongoing investigation into issues pertaining to student retention and engagement. With all the disparities that exist within the educational system, these components of learning must be taken into consideration when solidifying the validity of a particular teaching method. For instance, the ability to retain information is essential to understanding what is being taught in the classroom. One of the most effective strategies in ensuring that this goal is accomplished is by providing lessons and activities that capture the attention of the students. The arts, in particular, leave valuable impressions that would assist in this endeavor. As stated by Charles C. Bronwell and

James A. Elison *in Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom* (1991), "Brain-compatible learning means that educators should weave math, geography, social skills, role-play, science, and physical education together, along with movement, drama, and the arts" (p. 66). The brain is merely a vessel of cognition, memory and intelligence; and the arts have been proven to build a student's brain capacity, especially as it pertains to long-term memory (Jenson, 2001). It is important to mention, however, that building the students brain capacity is not enough. They must also be actively engaged in the learning experience.

Over the years, there have been a multitude of interpretations in which engagement has been defined. For example, some researchers refer to student engagement as primarily observable behaviors (Brophy, 1983; Natriello, 1984; as cited in Fredricks et al., 2011); however, others have attached engagement to emotional constructs, which may include affiliation and enjoyment (Connell, 1990; Finn 1989; as cited in Fredricks et al., 2011). In addition, other researchers have included cognitive engagement as a key component in a psychological investment in learning (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; as cited in Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004, p. 7) Jennifer A. Fredricks, Phyllis C. Blumenfeld, and Alison H. Paris (2004) have studied aspects of studied engagement as a combination of all three forms of engagement (p. 8). During a recent study conducted by the DC Collaborative program (2011), "students demonstrated more enthusiasm for learning, stronger participation in the classroom, and a sense of ownership of their work" (p. 3) when engaged in art-integrated and hands-on learning activities. They went on to say that, "According to participating teachers, students were

better able to retain and apply information when learned through authentic arts activities, meaning arts activities that were relevant and connected to their own experiences" (DC Collaborative, 2011, p. 3). This study implies that arts integration can be highly effective if teachers consider the culture of their students, along with other aspects of the lived experiences.

Arts Integration and Cognitive Development

"At its core, Hip Hop is not just an art form; it is the pursuit of one's authentic being through the Arts*"* (p. 64).
KRS ONE, *Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (2009)

Often times, the human experience involves the process of finding purpose and meaning in a mundane world. The relationship between internal and external factors of the human condition sparks curiosity and acts as a catalyst for investigations, explorations, experimentations, artistic expressions, etc. As it pertains to education, it is imperative for teachers to provide an engaging environment that supports these aspects of learning, especially through the arts, because the arts represent the "heights of human achievement" (Davis, 2008, p. 2). More importantly, as Elliot W. Eisner (2002) suggests, the arts teaches students how to pay more attention to the quality of relationships, develop forms of thinking and attitudes that will enable them to solve problems effectively and build cognitive and technical skills through various materials. In addition, students learn how to exercise their imaginations through aesthetic forms and transform qualities of their experiences through specific means of communication (pp. 70 – 90).

One specific manner in which students can explore the arts is through arts integration. According to Natalie Kidd (2010), arts integration "is used with the standard academic subject class as a tool to improve understanding and comprehension" (para. 3). With this in mind, arts integration has the potential to generate cohesion of content and culture by acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills through an interdisciplinary approach to learning. Eric Jensen (2001) suggests that the arts enhance the process of learning because it allows students to be in a classroom environment that promotes discovery, connects learners to the world of real work that involve the arts, and assists in students sustaining and self-directing their learning. Additionally, students of lower socioeconomic status, specifically in urban areas, gain much more from arts instruction than those in a higher status (pp. 2 – 3). In the book, *Integrating the Arts: An Approach to Teaching and Learning in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings*, Merryl Goldberg (2006) expounds on the relationships between the arts and other core subjects and how the acquisition of knowledge and learning takes place. She mentions several theories of intellectual development and how language, culture, and technology could benefit students in the classroom if they learn with and through the arts. As she explains, “The arts, as a methodology for teaching and learning, provide the teacher with an expanded repertoire of actions and activities to introduce subject matter” (Goldberg, 2006, p. 5). This is primarily due to the fact that the arts provide an effective mode of communication, especially if the teacher respects the culture of his or her students. She further mentions, “Art is a language of expression and communication that has always been, and will always remain, a fundamental aspect of the human condition and the perpetuation of cultures” (Goldberg, 2006, p. 9). Therefore, arts integration should be

considered a teaching method that would support culturally responsive teaching.

While arts integration assists in developing greater understandings of the world, it also helps students learn more about themselves. Scholars, such as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Howard Gardner, have researched the connections between art and psychology and have developed several theories related to cognitive development. Piaget's philosophy is based on the idea that a person's cognitive development is directly related to the biological make-up of any given organism. In contrast, Vygotsky's writings describe cognition as a result of one's immediate environment, which may include social interaction. The foundation of both Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories can be traced back to psychological behaviorism, which describes, "the behavior of individuals as they responded to various stimulus conditions provided by their environment" (Efland, 2002, p. 15). However, Howard Gardner challenged these early investigations of cognition by implying that while indeed there are intellectual capacities that develop through various stages, it should not be looked at through a logical-scientific lens but rather through an intertwining of cognitive and affective elements (Efland, 2002). As a result, he proposed the theory of multiple intelligences, which "promoted the view that there are seven discernible forms of intelligence" (Efland, 2002, p. 39). Scholars, such as Eric Jenson (2001), believe that the arts enhance the process of learning because it has a lasting effect on neuro-biological systems of the brain (p. 2), which is the source of cognition. Therefore, teaching methods must be conducive to supporting cognitive development. Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison (1991) support this notion by inferring, "Brain-compatible learning means that educators should weave math, geography, social skills,

role-play, science, and physical education together, along with movement, drama, and the arts" (p. 66).

The elements of Hip Hop culture can be a major proponent of arts integration because it encompasses a variety of artistic expressions that could help students find meaning in the context of their learning experiences. Ultimately, this authenticates the learning process by stressing the importance of understanding. In the book, *Understanding by Design*, Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (1998) state that, "understanding implies the ability to escape a naïve or inexperienced point of view" (p. 41). By developing a multifaceted perspective of what it means to understand a particular concept, this book provides six facets as the focal point for implementing effective teaching methods in the classroom: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Each one of these facets can be explored through the arts, and more specifically, through Hip Hop culture because each facet can be translated through various forms of communication, whether it's verbal, visual, musical, or bodily movements.

Multiple Intelligences and Personal Development

"According to the English language, to be *hip* means *to have knowledge of*. Again, it is a form of intelligence. *Hop* is a form of movement. And together *hip* and *hop* when spelled correctly as *Hip Hop* means *moving or jumping intelligence, even knowledgeable movement*. Hip Hop – *moving intelligence, active intelligence, intelligence moving,*

conscious movement or intelligent movement!" (p. 71)

KRS ONE, *Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (2009)

Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus, Second Edition (2002), defines intelligence as "the ability to learn or understand" or "the ability to cope with a new situation" (p. 334). While these definitions are vague descriptions of complex mental abilities and adaptations, the most standard and widely acceptable measurement of an individual's intelligence has been based on a person's "intelligent quotient" or IQ. However, Howard Gardner provided alternative ways of viewing one's intelligence. After years of research and observations, he eventually developed a theory that would identify nine different intelligences. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, include: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existentialist intelligence (as cited in Schmidt, 2004). Ultimately, this theory allows us to take into consideration the vastness of the human experience and how these experiences are expressed within the context of understanding. In *Classroom Confidential: The 12 Secrets of Great Teachers,* Laurel Schmidt (2004) explains, "We all have all of these intelligences, like a mosaic of abilities located in many different parts of our brains. They're interconnected, so we may use two or three to achieve a single task, but also work independently…Like muscles, they grow throughout your life if they're nurtured, which means that the right environment, kids can get smarter in lots of different ways" (p. 5). Taking this into consideration, educators must create an environment that encourages opportunities for individual and collective growth. When teachers provide lessons and interactive activities that evoke the creative genius of each child, the students learn to appreciate their strengths, while constantly looking for ways to

overcome their weaknesses. This allows students to become more flexible. Flexibility can become a valuable skill inside and outside of the classroom because they develop an ability to adjust to circumstances and conditions, while also achieving a higher sense of awareness. As a result, educators become equal opportunists because they constantly seek "signs of intelligent life in every child" (Schmidt, 2004, p. 3).

Linguistic Intelligence

Communication plays a pivotal role in the human condition and helps to personify our level of intelligence. Therefore it is critical for educators to emphasize the importance of effective communication. Merryl Goldberg (2006) mentions that poetry and language can give the students an opportunity to "create artistic forms to reveal self-knowledge and make connections to their world" (p. 75). This could be expressed in the form of rapping, which involves syncopated rhymes accompanied by various styles of delivery and conceptual themes that have all contributed to the popularization and eventually, the commercialization of Hip Hop. It is by far the most popular element that exists within the culture; however, it can also be the most effective tool in the classroom since it involves literary devices that could enhance language arts skills, such as: mnemonics and semantics. For example, my students were able to learn the 50 states of the United States of America by reciting them in alphabetical order in a rap song and were constantly involved in reading comprehension exercises that were based on rap lyrics. In addition to rap music, the art of graffiti can also make references to the relevance of language. Activities, such as "Graffiti Word Maps" (See Appendix F) can

provide the students an opportunity to construct and manipulate words in a creative manner.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

Having the ability to understand logical patterns and relationships between numbers and other expressions could also be explored using Hip Hop Integration. For instance, the students could make connections between multiplication and counting the loops of a record or beat. Since most Hip Hop instrumentals are measured in a standard time of four beats in each measure, the students could discover how counting and timing play a major role in music. Furthermore, the students could investigate the correlation between time and the art of deejaying by creating "Turntable Time Clocks" (See Appendix G). Activities that involve mathematical concepts would benefit the use of Hip Hop Integration because it would permit the students to understand complex ideas with ordinary objects. This would assist in understanding how mathematics is used in everyday life.

Musical Intelligence

The combination of both linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences could also support the use of music in the classroom. Eric Jenson (2005) explains, "Like mathematics, music has a universal language, with a symbolic way of representing the world" (p. 13). Thus, both mathematics and language could be an effective tool for

communication. Whether the teacher is playing music in the classroom or using it as a teaching tool, it could establish deeper understandings and insights of a particular genre, especially Hip Hop. Furthermore, the students could enhance their awareness of such nuances as: rhythm, melody, tone, energy and vibration by participating in activities that explore these aspects of music. For instance, the students could listen to music from rap artists from various regions and investigate how the artists' demographics influence their sounds. Also, the students could discuss how music can evoke certain moods and behavior.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

While music plays a pivotal role in Hip Hop, b-boying or breakdancing is also relevant. By integrating bodily-kinesthetic lessons and activities, the students would be able to engage in movement. Merryl Goldberg (2006) states, "In watching the performances, one can discern mathematical concepts including shape, lines, parallel lines, symmetry, sequence, patterns - both in groups of dancers, and in the repetition of individual steps. Counting is important as well " (p. 159). As Goldberg mentions, dance can potentially help with understanding basic concepts, especially in mathematics. B-boying can be one form of dance; however, a teacher should not limit themselves or their students to just this style. In retrospect, the teacher could identify various other styles within this particular art form. As a result, the students would learn about different "moves" and how it ties into various facets of math such as, arithmetic and geometry. The most important aspect of dancing is using movement as a means of expression. In the

book entitled, *Elementary Classroom Teachers as Movement Educators*, Kover, Combs, Campbell, Naper-Owen, and Worrell (2009) state, "People remember more when their bodies as well as their minds are active participants" (p. 231).

Spatial Intelligence

Spatial Intelligence pertains to the ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and perform transformations on those perceptions (Armstrong, 2000). This intelligence is especially beneficial to visual learners. Various aspects of Hip Hop culture involve visual and spatial ideas. For example, graffiti writers are particularly sensitive to space whether they are writing on paper, walls, or trains. The juxtaposition of the words and symbols must be taken into consideration when constructing the composition. The students can enhance their ability to understand relationships between elements that exist within visual art by examining, as well as, creating graffiti words themselves. Spatial intelligence could also include dance, which brings body awareness to the students by exploring the relationship between their bodies and space.

Interpersonal Intelligence

Since Hip Hop culture primarily involves collaboration, strong interpersonal skills would promote positive relationships with others if Hip Hop Integration was utilized in the classroom through teams and groups. Interpersonal intelligence includes having the ability to be sensitive to the moods, feelings, and

behaviors of others. In return, students would be able to gain a greater understanding of other people by acknowledging the value of other peoples' perspectives. By working on their interpersonal skills, students would be able to better empathize their own knowledge and experiences. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (1998) state that, "understanding in the interpersonal sense suggests not merely an intellectual change of mind but a significant change of heart" (p. 57). This could be accomplished by allowing the students to occasionally work in groups and projects that are carried out through cooperative learning techniques.

Intrapersonal Intelligence

While it is important for the students to understand the importance of understanding and working with others, they must also obtain a sense of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is "the wisdom to know one's ignorance and how one's patterns of thought and action inform as well as prejudice understanding" (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, p. 57). Knowledge of self is a key component in understanding and should be taken into consideration when applying the theory of multiple intelligences. Essentially, each student should have the chance relate to the subject matter through personal reflection. In doing so, they will learn more about themselves and the world around them. Ultimately, this will allow each student to fully comprehend how he/she may contribute to a group project, the culture of the class, the community, or society as a whole.

Naturalist Intelligence

In order to fully understand themselves, the students must also learn about their surroundings and how their environment affects their lives. This is referred to as the naturalist intelligence, which is "attuned to the patterns and connections in the elements of nature" (Schmidt, 2004, p. 7). Activities that incorporate Hip Hop culture within astronomy, biology, chemistry, etc. would be beneficial to students who are both strong and weak in comprehending these different aspects of science. For example, the students could participate in an activity that explains the physical characteristics of each planet of the solar system using poetry (See Appendix H).

Existentialist Intelligence

The latest intelligence that Howard Gardner incorporated into his theory refers to interests in philosophy, religion, and/or spirituality (Schmidt, 2004). The existentialist intelligence has the ability to inform students of these implications within Hip Hop culture if some of these aspects were mentioned within Hip Hop Integration. For instance, the students can do a study on various artists who use Hip Hop to inform others about their religious beliefs (i.e. Gospel Rap[2]) or learn the structural and symbolic similarities between lyrics and religious texts (Alim, 2006).

In summation, applying the theory of multiple intelligences could enhance the learning experiences of the students in the classroom because it considers the individual abilities that each of the students possesses. The students should feel a sense of

[2] Gospel Rap, also known as Christian rap, is Hip Hop music inspired by the Christian religion.

inclusion. And understanding how students learn would enable the teacher to develop lessons and activities that address to student's individual learning style. Howard Gardner points out, "We are all so different largely because we all have different combinations of intelligences. If we recognize this, I think we will have a least a better chance of dealing appropriately with the many problems that we face in the world" (as cited in Armstrong, 2000, p. 1).

Cooperative Learning and Social Development

"Hip Hop is the common ground that all people can meet upon" (p. 82).

KRS ONE, *Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (2009)

Cooperative learning supports a learning environment that instills a sense of community and collaboration. Spencer Kagan (1989) defines cooperative learning as "a set of instructional strategies which include cooperative student-student interaction over subject matter as an integral part of the process" (p. 4:I). By working in small groups, cooperative learning allows students to carry out certain roles and responsibilities to accomplish a specific goal. In the book, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility,* Thomas Lickona (1991) provides several teaching strategies suggest that teachers should, "Use cooperative learning to teach children the disposition and skills of helping each other and working together" (p. 70). This technique also enables students to exchange ideas, promote positive feedback to their peers, and engage in activities that require interdependence. Essentially, these are characteristics of a model citizen; one who contributes and accepts multiple perspectives to acquire a

higher level of understanding and establish harmonious relationships with other members of society. In retrospect, the classroom itself should be treated as a microcosm of a greater social order, with the intent of elevating moral behavior through social development. Lickona (1991) suggests that cooperative learning: teaches the value of cooperation, helps to build community in the classroom, assists in developing basic life skills and improves academic achievement, self-esteem, and attitude toward school (pp. 187).

As stated earlier, Vygotsky's theoretical framework of cognition relied greatly on social interaction. Vygotsky states, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (as cited in Culatta, 2013). This is usually obtained through the zone of proximal development, which is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (as cited in McLeod, 2012). Vygostsky's theory supports the idea that the best way for students to develop the necessary skills and strategies to solve problems is through cooperative learning, where struggling students are paired with students with a higher degree of proficiency in a given subject or topic. This can only be accomplished if the teacher is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each student and strategically

places them in groups that would be beneficial to their learning process.

Kagan (2009) provides a series of structures, which are teaching strategies that promote cooperative learning in the classroom. He defines a structure as "the way the interaction among teachers, students, and content is organized" (p. 5.3). There are currently over two hundred Kagan Structures. Each structure is categorized as either interpersonal or academic. The interpersonal structures aim to enhance "classbuilding", "teambuilding", "social skills", "communication skills" or "decision-making skills"; while the academic structures help develop "knowledgebuilding", "procedure learning", "processing info", "thinking skills", and "presenting info skills". On the other hand, Lickona (1991) classifies eight kinds of cooperative learning, which include: learning partners, cluster group seating, student team learning, jigsaw learning, team testing, small-group projects, team competition, and whole-class projects. (pp. 195-196) Jigsaw learning, in particular, was established to alleviate issues concerning racial tension that were a result of desegregation. In this particular format, a lesson is divided into subtopics and the class is broken up into teams mixed with different abilities and racial backgrounds. Within each group, there is assigned an "expert" who is responsible for sharing the material they've learned with other groups. The experts will then return to their original teams and share what they have learned to their respective group members. Once completed, all the students would be quizzed individually on these specific subtopics (Lickona, 1991, p. 193). This particular method is beneficial to social development because it supports the theory of zone proximal development proposed by Vygotsky.

Over the years there has been significant research pertaining to cooperative learning. Individuals such as Walberg (1999), Lipsey & Wilson (1993), Hall (1989) and Johnson (1981) have researched extensively on the benefits of cooperative learning and have all concluded that, "organizing students in cooperative learning groups has a powerful effect on learning" (as cited in Marzano, Pickering & Polluck, 2001, p. 87). The essence of Hip Hop culture is based on collaboration; however, it also embraces individuality. Often times, proponents of the culture established collective units as a means to share ideas and demonstrate various skill levels. This is evident in the formation of crews by some of Hip Hop's pioneers, such as: DJ Kool Herc and the Herculoids and Afrika Bambaataa and the Universal Zulu Nation. Cooperative learning is critical to this study because it solidifies the support of Hip Hop Integration since it shows that the concept of social interaction plays a pivotal role in the learning process, much like it would to the development of a particular culture, such as Hip Hop.

Altering Perceptions of Hip Hop Culture

While this study emphasizes the positive attributes that Hip Hop culture possesses, it would be a disservice to the research if some of the more negative views were not mentioned. As stated earlier, I believe that Hip Hop can be, and has been, used as a tool to empower young people, more specifically African Americans and Latinos. What is remarkable about Hip Hop culture is the fact that it has experienced a multitude of transformations in such a short period of time. However, since it is a reflection of the thoughts, words, and behavior of the youth, the product that has been created has also

developed through stages, much like an adolescent. These stages can often times be ridiculed and scrutinized by the adult population, much like Rock & Roll and Jazz during its heydays. Tricia Rose (2008) argues that Hip Hop is actually in a terrible crisis (p. 1). She states:

> Although its overall fortunes have risen sharply, the most commercially promoted and financially successful hip hop – what has dominated mass-media outlets such as television, film, radio, and recording industries for a dozen years or so – has increasingly become a playground for caricatures of black gangstas, pimps, and hoes. (Rose, 2008, p. 1)

Yet, Rose also mentions that this deviates from the core images, attitudes, and icons that existed in Hip Hop during its earlier years (Rose, 2008, p. 2). In her book, *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop – and Why it Matters*, Rose refers to five different criticisms that mirror the negative perceptions of Hip Hop culture. She suggests that Hip Hop's critics believe it causes violence, reflects black dysfunctional ghetto culture, hurts black people, destroys America's values, and demeans women (Rose, 2008). Her argument, however, is that there are a variety of styles in rap music but they are disregarded by the corporate mainstream. As a result, there have been conflicting views that distinguish what is being played on mainstream media and what actually exists within the culture. Cora Daniels indicates:

> Those who truly live the music will tell you that, like jazz, digging-in-the-crates hip-hop overflowing with thoughtful rhymes political commentary, rebellious prose, and emotion. While I fully understand the differences between radio hip-hop and true hip-hop, it really doesn't matter. Most folks will never hear the digging-in-the-crates hip-hop. That is because radio hip-hop is what sells and sells and sells. The reality is, it is the only hip-hop most of us know. (as cited in McWhorter, 2008, p. 75)

This type of separatism understandably has provided misconceptions about Hip Hop and while there are positive and negative aspects of the culture, there seems to be an overwhelming presentation of the negativity to the masses to point where some people believe that it has no real significance to society. In *Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*, S. Craig Watkins (2005) believes that its relevance lies in the impact it has on the cultural and political mainstream (p. 5). According to Watkins (2005), "In addition to being a pop culture force, hip hop's widening sphere of influence has shouldered it with the burden of being a genuine political force" (p. 6). On the other hand, John McWhorter negates this notion. He believes that Hip Hop culture has nothing to offer in terms of political activism, especially the black community. (McWhorter, 2008, p. 8)

Bakari Kitwana's, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture*, identifies various issues that may have an impact on peoples' perceptions, which include: unemployment, incarceration, sexism, and black

gangster films (Kitwana, 2002). In contrast, he also offers several solutions to these underlying problems. He feels that the only way to confront these issues is to redefine social responsibility, to identify a specific political agenda, and to find ways to constantly challenge Hip Hop as merely a cultural movement to more of a political power (Kitwana, 2002). Regardless of varying perceptions, Hip Hop also needs to be considered on a global scale. While there are issues that remain prevalent in America, there are other countries that have benefited from this cultural phenomenon. Whether it is used to speak out against the apartheid in South Africa or as a response to the injustices of the reservations in Canada (Higgins, 2009), its potential to be a political force does exist, as well as, having the capabilities of being a catalyst for social and economic change. These implications have influenced this particular study, as I believe that Hip Hop culture can be used as a tool for advancement, especially for young African American and Latino students in the educational system. Regardless of the way some may view Hip Hop culture, it can at least be considered a catalyst for constructive commentary on matters that remain ever-present in our society. If it were integrated inside of the classroom, maybe the students would finally feel like they have a voice. The next section further investigates how others, particularly educators, view the conception that Hip Hop Integration could be used as an educational pedagogy.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

As stated earlier, this research was intended to investigate how the elements of Hip Hop culture can be utilized as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching and potentially enhance student retention and engagement in the classroom for African American and Latino students in urban areas. While there is evidently an academic gap between these two ethnic groups, compared to Whites and Asians in the educational system in the United States of America, I believe Hip Hop culture is a universal movement that could impact members of all racial groups. This is evident through the vastness and pervasiveness of Hip Hop culture all over the world. It has proven to be an impactful and legitimate culture that assists in providing insights on social, political, and economic issues that permeate society as a whole. In *Hip Hop World*, Dalton Higgins mentions, "Hip hop's adaptability becomes even more marked internationally because at its genesis rap music essentially involves creating something out of nothing" (p. 10) The potential challenges that this research may face would be primarily based on the negative images of Hip Hop that pervade the airwaves of radio and television. As a result, some participants of the study may have been completely unaware of the more positive aspects of the culture, such as: its ability to address social and political concerns, its influence on economic development, or its effectiveness in the classroom as pedagogy. Furthermore, this study did not delve into the possible impact

that Hip Hop culture can have on students from other residential areas, such as suburban and rural communities. In spite of these potential limitations, the framework of validity for this particular research was aimed to be credible, transferrable, dependable, and confirmable.

Research Summary

The goal of this investigation was to gain more insight on how to effectively incorporate Hip Hop culture into the classroom as a means to justify the implementation of Hip Hop Integration. This was accomplished by conducting two qualitative approaches, which were interviews and surveys. The qualitative approach seemed to be a practical form of inquiry because it allows the researcher to delve deeper into the perspectives of its participants. Ethnography, in particular, helps to describe a study of a specific population to better understand a certain culture. In this manner, each research method was strategically executed to provide a glimpse of the human experience, especially as it relates to Hip Hop culture. The interviews were semi-structured, which included audio recordings of conversations with participants who have been supporters and advocates of Hip Hop culture. Furthermore, these participants have had prior experiences using Hip Hop as a pedagogical tool, whether it was in the classroom or during an after-school program. The objective of the interviews was to learn how other educators were using Hip Hop in the classroom, how the students have responded (retention, engagement, academic performance, etc.), and if educators felt it was as effective as traditional teaching methods. While the interviews had a specific

target audience, the survey gave a broader response of educators' opinions and perspectives on Hip Hop culture. This particular method gathered information on the participants' demographic backgrounds, as well as, information pertaining to their general perceptions of Hip Hop culture. In addition, the purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding of how others may have perceived using Hip Hop culture as a viable resource for student retention, engagement, improvement on standardized testing, and overall academic performances.

Data Collection Methods

Participants

In order to determine whether educators feel that Hip Hop culture could be used as a pedagogical tool to enhance retention and engagement, a total of 73 educators participated in an online survey. In conjunction with these participants, two specific educators were asked to contribute to the research by partaking in a structured interview. These specific participants were selected based on their knowledge and experiences in the related field. The first contributor, P. Thandi Hicks Harper, PhD, President of The Youth Popular Culture Institute and Vice President/Director of Research for Billo Communications, is noted as being the first academia to research and practice the use of rap music as pedagogy. She is also the author of two books, *Hip-Hop Development: Exploring Hip-Hop Culture as a Youth Engagement Tool for Successful Community Building* and *Body Parts Rap 4 Kids: An Activity Book 4 Hip-Hop Kids, A Leader's Guide*

4 Parents, Teachers, and Friends of Children. Dr. Hicks Harper has also written numerous articles and co-authored two books including: *Hip-Hop's Influence Within Youth Popular Culture: A Catalyst for Reaching Youth with Substance Abuse Prevention Messages* and *The Status of Black Adolescent Families in the District of Columbia*. She has taught on elementary, secondary and college levels, and has specifically taken an interest in using Hip Hop culture as a teaching tool since 1983. Currently, Dr. Hicks Harper is exploring the connection between popular culture and interactive media technologies and using them as commodities for encouraging optimal health, educational aptitudes, and strengthening community development.

The second participant uses Hip Hop to address social, political, and economic issues that remain prevalent in urban communities. Dr. Bettina Love is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Elementary and Social Studies at the University of Georgia and spearheads an after-school program entitled, *Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice*, which primarily promotes issues of social justice, such as: race, gender, and equality in education. Furthermore, she is the author of *Hip Hop's Lil Sistas Speak,* which "explores how young women navigate the space of Hip Hop music and culture to form ideas concerning race, body, class, inequality and privilege" ("Publications", n.d., para. 1). She has also written various articles that pertain to race and homosexuality. I chose her as a participant, in particular, because I wanted to personally learn more about these issues, not only as they relate to Hip Hop culture, but also to society as a whole. The idea of using Hip Hop to promote social justice is a key component in providing a voice for those who often times receive scrutiny from a larger

community. In retrospect, I believe her knowledge and experiences would provide deeper understandings of certain issues that directly reflect the cultural framework of the United States of America.

Instrumentation

The survey questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for this study (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was designed to generate relevant information related to the participants' socio-demographic characteristics, such as: gender, age, race/ethnicity, and educational background. It was intended to describe and explain statistically, the variability of certain features of teachers in the educational field (Marshall & Rossman, 2010, p. 125). The survey explored the participants' teaching experiences that included how they have been teaching the subject(s) that they teach or have taught. It also contained questions that identified their overall perceptions of Hip Hop culture and whether the elements of Hip Hop culture can be integrated in the classroom to enhance retention, engagement, academic performances, and standardized test scores. This particular section was structured using the Likert format in which six choices were provided that represented the degree of agreement on this given topic. The scale consisted of six different responses: Not Applicable, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The Likert format was selected for this specific section to provide an effective use of data representation. Finally, the survey proposed an open-ended question, "Would you be interested in learning how to integrate Hip Hop culture in the classroom?

Why or Why not?" Essentially, this question was meant to capture more insight into educators' views of possibly using Hip Hop culture to facilitate learning in the classroom.

The survey was constructed using SurveyMonkey®, which provides online questionnaires and allows members to design surveys, collect responses, and analyze the results. While the website does provide various levels of membership, I chose the basic plan. With this plan, I was able to formulate 10 questions that would permit a maximum of 100 responses. I was able to send the survey to potential participants via email and Facebook. The online tool provided real-time results that were illustrated in various chart types and display options that made it remarkably easy to analyze.

In conjunction with the online survey, the interviews were conducted using an audio recording with a software application called GarageBand for Apple Inc. The conversations took place while I was using my cellular phone, a Samsung Galaxy S II. The interview questions (See Appendix B) were mentioned throughout the interviews although they were not asked in a specific order. I wanted the discussion to be organic, yet directed towards a specific goal. Therefore, the questions were not forced into the conversation but rather led to deeper elaborations on topics that were mentioned. Nevertheless, this particular method was beneficial to the research because it provided first-hand experiences of the participants.

Data Processing and Analysis

After gathering all the completed surveys, total responses for each item were tabulated. The replies to the open-ended questions, in particular, were highlighted and organized according to their explanations. Some examples of categories that were formulated based on the data were backgrounds, perceptions of Hip Hop culture, and the willingness to integrate it into their individual classrooms. By recognizing and comparing the participants' responses, I would develop a better understanding of the support and challenges that I would face in presenting Hip Hop Integration as an effective teaching strategy. In addition to analyzing the results from the survey, the interviews were transcribed and examined to gain more clarification on how personal experiences of the participants could potentially affect the direction of study. Therefore, I was constantly reflecting and processing information as the conversations took place. In essence, the participants became processed data (Wengraf, 2001, p. 7). Successes and failures, along with subjective reasoning, were some of main objectives in conducting these interviews. I also wanted to know if the interviewees were involved with the culture themselves, or merely spectators who proactively perpetuated a current trend in curriculum development and pedagogy. The priority of this method was to ensure authenticity and genuineness in their approach, as well as, the willingness to provide practical strategies that have proven to be effective in the classroom. Ultimately, the goal was to determine if Hip Hop Integration could feasibly adhere to the qualifications of an effective teaching strategy by comparing it to others. The next chapter describes the analysis more in depth.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

This chapter mainly focuses on the results of the two research methods conducted for this study, which are meant to support the use of Hip Hop Integration as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching. Ultimately, I wanted to ensure the validity of this teaching method by learning how other educators view Hip Hop culture, as well as, a deeper understanding on how certain teachers are currently using it as pedagogy. Therefore, it provides a summary of the backgrounds, perceptions and experiences of the contributors involved with the intent to clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings.

Online Survey

As mentioned in the methodology section, this research study contained an online survey that served to gain more insight on educators' perceptions of Hip Hop culture, their demographics, and their willingness to learn more about Hip Hop Integration. It must be noted that one participant skipped all of the questions except the open-ended portion at the end of the survey; therefore, all of the percentages are based on 72 respondents, except where stated otherwise. As a result, out of the 72 people who answered the question about their gender, 58 (80.56%) were female and 14 (19.44%) were male. Their age groups; however, varied with 27 (37.50%) participants being

between the ages of 18 and 29 years old and 23 (31.94%) being between 30 and 39 years old. Additionally, 10 (13.89%) were in the range of 40 to 49 years old, 8 (11.11%) were between the ages of 50 and 59, and 4 (5.56%) were 60 years old or older. When asked to describe their ethnic backgrounds, I intentionally left an option to choose "Multiracial/Other", due to the sensitivity of the subject. If the participants were to select this option, they were required to specify their race or ethnicity. Out of the 72 respondents, 3 chose this option and entered: Euro-American, South American/Native Indian/Spanish, and Caribbean, respectively. In addition, 22 out of the 72 (30.56 %) respondents considered themselves White, 47 (65.28%) were Black or African American, and 2 (2.78%) were Latino or Hispanic American. One out of 72 educators were Native American, Asian, or Pacific Islander, each making up 1.39% percent of the population. The diversity within this group reflects the initial target audience, which primarily sprung from a network of personal associates, coworkers, and classmates. Therefore, it is not necessarily based on the national statistics of ethnic groups within the educational field.

The next section pertains to the participants' educational backgrounds. For instance, when asked about their highest level of school, all of the participants at least had a high school degree and went on to college. However, 6 (8.33%) participants have had college experience but have not earned a degree in a specific field. Three out of the 72 respondents (4.17%) have earned an Associate's degree, 29 (40.28%) received a Bachelor's degree, and 34 (47.22%) have earned a Graduate degree. In addition to their education, I was also curious about the subjects they teach. Therefore, the survey was comprised of a question that would collect data regarding this matter. The answer choices

were based on the four core subjects (Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies), as well as, extracurricular activities that may include Art and Physical Education. The respondents also had an option to choose "other", contingent upon specifications that were required to be mentioned. While 27 participants chose this option, 16 (30.19%) of them taught Language Arts, 14 (26.42%) taught Mathematics, 10 (18.87%) taught Science and 12 (22.64%) taught Social Studies. According to data, there were 53 total responses, while 20 participants skipped this question. Therefore, the percentages are based on the total responses, as oppose to, the total number of people who completed the entire survey. A full list of specifications regarding the "other" option can found in the Appendix section. (See Appendix C) Furthermore, 34 (47.22%) respondents have taught between 1 to 4 years, 18 (25%) have taught from 5 to 9 years, 10 (13.89%) have been educators between 10 and 14 years, 2 (2.78%) participants have been teaching for 15 to 20 years, and 8 (11.11%) have taught for 20 years or more. The next section includes data related to the respondents' general perceptions of Hip Hop, as a culture and as a pedagogical tool.

In addition to asking the participants questions pertaining to their demographics and teaching careers, they also were inquired about their general perceptions of Hip Hop culture. Among the 72 responses, 31 (43.06%) had a positive perspective, 8 (11.11%) had a negative, and a total of 33 (45.83%) participants took a neutral position. According to this data, most of the educators do not look at the culture from a negative viewpoint, although there is an overwhelming presence of negativity in the media. To understand fully how they viewed its potential impact on their students, the

respondents were queried about the elements of Hip Hop culture being integrated into the classroom. This section was broken down into four different categories and referred to the students' retention, engagement, academic performances, and standardized test scores. Two out of the 72 (2.78%) respondents disagreed that the elements could enhance retention, while 13 (18.06%) were neutral. Twenty-nine (40.28%) agreed that these elements could actually enhance retention and 26 out of the 72 (36.11%) strongly agreed. Only 2.78% (2) of the participants entered, "Not Applicable". Moreover, none of the educators believed that Hip Hop could not enhance engagement; therefore, they were either neutral or agreed with the statement. Two (2.78%) of the responses were neutral, 31 (43.06%) agreed, and (52.78%) strongly agreed. One (1.39%) of the participants considered the statement, "Not Applicable". When asked if Hip Hop could improve academic performances, 2 (2.78%) disagreed, 20 (27.78%) were neutral, 29 (40.28%) agreed, and 20 (27.78%) strongly disagreed. Again, only 1 responded, "Not Applicable". Lastly, 1 out of the 72 (1.39%) strongly disagreed that the elements of Hip Hop culture could enhance standardized test scores if they were integrated in the classroom, while 13 (18.06%) strongly agreed that they could. Also, 8 (11.11%) disagreed while 17 (23.61%) disagreed, 31 (43.06%) were neutral, and 2 (2.78%) believed the statement was not applicable. The higher percentage rates for agreement informs that most of the educators believe that Hip Hop culture could assist in developing the students aptitude and participation in the classroom.

The last question in the survey asked the participants, "Would you be interested in learning how to integrate Hip Hop culture in the classroom? Why or why

not?" This question was intentionally placed within the survey to gain feedback on whether educators were willing to take a step further in incorporating Hip Hop culture in their own respective classrooms as pedagogy. As a result, most of the respondents agreed that it would not only be beneficial to themselves, but also for their students. In fact, 64 out of the 73 (87.67%) responses answered "yes" to this question while only 9 (12.33%) were not interested. One participant added:

> We need to reach out to them by incorporating something they are interested in and can relate to. We also need to teach our subjects in a way they are more likely to retain the information and most importantly we need to grasp their attention and motivation. It would make learning more enjoyable for the students and thus the teacher (Anonymous, Hip Hop Integration: A Pedagogical Tool for Culturally Responsive Teaching, January 29, 2013).

On the contrary, one of the participants who opposed the idea of learning more about Hip Hop Integration expressed, "Although it [Hip Hop] is a form of art, I think there is a lot of negativity associated with it and its underlying themes" (Anonymous, Hip Hop Integration: A Pedagogical Tool for Culturally Responsive Teaching, January 8, 2013). Another educator responded, "No. At first, I thought that it may have a positive impact, however it would be difficult to integrate this form of culture when there is more of a negative perception of Hip Hop than a positive one" (Anonymous, Hip Hop Integration: A Pedagogical Tool for Culturally Responsive

Teaching, January 29, 2013). Other opposing views consisted of participants who either felt they lacked the qualifications to use Hip Hop or were not interested in learning from others because they were already using it themselves. A full list of the responses related to this topic can be found in the Appendix section of this thesis. (See Appendix C)

Interviews

This research study also included two interviews by educators who have previous experiences using Hip Hop culture as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. The first interview, which took place on March 12, 2013, lasted for 52 minutes and 57 seconds, while the second interview took 46 minutes and 52 seconds to complete on March 18, 2013. Since both interviews were semi-structured, there was room for new questions to be developed as the discussions took place, as well as, opportunities to ask the interview questions in random order. For example, beyond just the basic background information, I also wanted to know some of the musical artists they are currently listening to. While, Dr. Hicks-Harper mentioned some of the more "seasoned" artists, Dr. Bettina Love stated both old and new artists. This was intentionally placed at the early part of the conversation in order to establish some commonalities.

As the interviews continued, I was able to receive information on their initial ideas of using Hip Hop culture in the classroom and some of the struggles they endured during that particular time, in addition to their successes. For instance, Dr. Hicks-Harper stated, "In 1987, I did my master's thesis from Howard University and it

was the first…candid if you will…the first research-based thesis that took a look at rap music for pedagogy." (personal communication, March 12, 2013) She went on to mention, "This particular study, it was called 'A Relationship between Rap Music and Learning Retention in the Urban Preschool'…It was a quantitative study and Roots[3] [Activity Learning Center] was one of my core preschools that I used as a part of the study….and it was definitely the first study because even at Howard University they really kicked back in terms of why did I just want to study about Black kids? Why do our people want to study about rap music period?" (Hicks-Harper, T., personal communication, March 12, 2013). Although this was her first research study, she originally developed the idea in 1983, while her son was in school in New Jersey. At first, she really didn't like the genre; however, she saw how young people were attracted to it. Consequently, she started to consider Hip Hop as a viable resource to reach her students who were performing "at the bottom when it comes to academic achievement" (Hicks-Harper, T., personal communication, March 12, 2013). Hicks-Harper believed that "the congruence to home and school culture is critical" (personal communication, March 12, 2013). Therefore, she became interested in culturally responsive pedagogy, more specifically, how it relates to Hip Hop culture.

In contrast, Dr. Love had a totally different experience. She always was an enthusiast of Hip Hop culture and this is what inspired her to incorporate it into her classroom in Miami, FL. She explained:

[3] Dr. Hicks-Harper mentioned Roots Activity Learning Center because prior to the recording, I told her that I currently work at the school.

> When I was in Miami, it was my second year of teaching and it became apparent to me that I have so much in common with my students. The one thing that I had in common with them was Hip Hop, so why was I constantly trying not to bring in our bond? I realized, once I started bringing Hip Hop into the classroom and opening myself to my students, it was a big shift (Love, B., personal communication, March 18, 2013).

In addition to learning how these educators initially started using Hip Hop in the classroom, I thought it was equally imperative for the interviewees to provide their personal definitions of the culture. Dr. Love defined Hip Hop culture as a "self expression [that] particularly comes out of Black experience" of "oppression" and "being disenfranchise" (Love, B., personal communication, March 18, 2013). However, Dr. Hicks-Harper believed Hip Hop culture is a movement. She implied:

> When you talk about culture, you're talking about giving younger people, or older people now, a sense of belonging and behaving a certain way. It's a amoeba-like in nature meaning that it's constantly changing but at the same time, there are things in Hip Hop culture that remain the same" (Hicks-Harper, T., personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Beyond just their definitions and perceptions of Hip Hop culture, its practical use in the classroom was equally important to this study. Therefore, each participant was able to refer several strategies that they implemented to perpetuate their

philosophies of education and their interests in the subject matter. Both of the interviewees believed that students were not only able to retain information using this teaching method, but also were more engaged in the classroom. Dr. Hicks-Harper concluded:

> I did find as part of this study that there's a significant difference at the [INAUDIBLE 6:05] level and students that were receiving instructions via rap music and those who were receiving instruction via verbal conversational speech and I inferred that rap music motivated the children to practice. I did a T-test and that showed that big significant difference and this was consistent across the schools that I did this with, did the study with (personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Currently, she has a science-based Hip Hop curriculum that "demonstrates the positive effects of adolescent cognition and behavior" (Hicks-Harper, T., personal communication, March 12, 2013) called *Hip-Hop to Prevent Substance Use and HIV Among African American Youth: A Preliminary Investigation*[4] that ties into Hip Hop Development™, "a theory of change" and "practical application" that cultivates the "vocal features of Hip Hop culture" (Hicks-Harper, T., personal communication, March

[4] Turner-Musa, J.O., Rhodes, W.A., Hicks Harper, P.T., Quinton, S.L. (2008). Hip-Hop to Prevent Substance Use and HIV Among African American Youth: A Preliminary Investigation. Journal of Drug Education. Retrieved from http://api.ning.com/files/ey0cSZWzFajsdLG8zQdj3-3ExCBwLg5cDOYmM4AVu9LYdbK2Gg3gpL*9krCB2vwwsyP*5N-ZHH3bnVWwumzfCPy-Jd-d1r3J/HipHop2PreventInvestigation.pdf

12, 2013) to motivate middle school students to strive for better health, academic achievement, and social responsibility.

Dr. Bettina Love, on the other hand emphasized the need to explore all five elements[5] of Hip Hop culture. During her afterschool program, *Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice*[6], her students were introduced to Hip Hop with the common core standards in mind. As a result, they were involved in activities that linked breakdancing to physics, rap to history, and graffiti to math. After twenty-two weeks, the program concluded with a final project related to Trayvon Martin[7] in which the students "chose to create a short movie, a rap song, and a mural that reflected stereotypes and assumptions" (Love, B., personal communication, March 18, 2013). Currently, she is writing various articles on Hip Hop education for social justice and working with students at Georgia Tech University and Spelman College. Transcriptions for both Love and Hicks-Harper can be found in the Appendix section of this thesis (See Appendices D & E).

[5] Some consider *knowledge* to be the fifth element of Hip Hop culture.
[6] http://www.bettinalove.com/2012/09/12/real-talk-hip-hop-education-for-social-justice/
[7] Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old, African American boy who was fatally shot on February 26, 2012 in Sanford, FL.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusions, and Lessons Learned

This current study was sought out to justify the use of Hip Hop culture as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching. Based on research and observations, the findings suggest that the elements of Hip Hop could indeed, enhance student retention and engagement for African American and Latino students in urban areas. More importantly, this teaching method could potentially reach a wide range of students, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, on the premise that the underlying implications of the culture ultimately has a universal appeal to the youth. Additionally, the fact that Hip Hop culture revolves around the arts, allows it to be a schema for personal and social development. Several scholars, such as Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Laurel Schmidt support the significance of culture in the classroom, while others like Eric Jenson, Merryl Goldberg, Elliot W. Eisner, and Jessica Hoffmann Davis, identify the benefits of integrating the arts into the curriculum.

According to the research study, a substantial amount of educators from diverse ethnic and educational backgrounds believe that Hip Hop culture could not only impact the retention and engagement of their students, but are also interested in integrating it into their own classroom. This was particularly evident in the online survey, where 87.67% percent of the respondents were willing to learn more about the pedagogy. I especially found it intriguing, that those who either had a negative perception of Hip Hop culture or were disinterested in using it in their classrooms were primarily White

females, between the ages of 18 and 39, and African American females, older than 50 years old. Their highest level of education varied, however, from some college but no degree to graduate degrees. Only two men (1 African American and 1 White) conveyed a disinterest, both with less than four years of teaching. This tells me that most educators see the value of Hip Hop culture for their students, despite having differences in their personal perceptions, and only a selected few believe that it is irrelevant.

Based on the two one-on-one interviews, I was also able to broaden my outlook of Hip Hop culture's usefulness. For instance, Dr. Hicks-Harper tied my interests and ideas into her theory of Hip Hop Development™, which I was unaware of prior to conducting the interview. As a result, I'm more consciously aware of this teaching method as an extension of a movement for educational reform. In essence, it has developed into a fight for civil rights because I view the academic achievement gap as a product of inequality, racism, and discrimination. Furthermore, this fight must be equipped with a mission and purpose that directly relates to social, political, and economic issues that pervade our society. Dr. Bettina Love's implication that Hip Hop can be used to raise social issues, specifically, supports this notion. However, I notice a direct link between all three facets of the American educational system. The fact that the disparities of the educational system (i.e. reading levels and graduation rates) are connected to the increase in prisons[8], which in return, is a product of poverty, makes it apparent that there are problems that must be addressed if positive changes are to occur.

[8] More information related to this topic can found in the article, "Choosing Prisoners Over Pupils" by Andrew Block and Virginia Weisz on Washington Post's website at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A29806-2004Jul5.html.

Inevitably, there are also conflicting views from others who feel that Hip Hop culture is insignificant and is, in fact, destroying the youth. Some argue that there is too much negativity that is being depicted. Whether it pertains to compulsive lyrics driven by greed, misogyny, and homophobia or undesirable images being portrayed by certain individuals, there will always be positive and negative aspects of any given construct developed by man. And while these remnants of unsuitable behavior do exist, it shouldn't be appropriated to the entire culture, especially since there is an undeniable influence from media that overwhelmingly reveals these images to the general public. One of the lessons that I learned from the interviews was that these conditions could actually provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue between the students and the teacher. As a result, lessons can be learned through both the struggles and triumphs. Realistically, this is the purpose of education; to gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences to provide solutions to problems that remain present in our everyday lives.

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Appendix A

Research Survey

Hip Hop Integration: A Pedagogical Tool for Culturally Responsive Teaching

The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of how educators perceive the integration of Hip Hop culture in the classroom. Hip Hop culture consists of four main elements, which include: deejaying, b-boying or breakdancing, rapping and graffiti. Examples of Hip Hop Integration could be: using rap lyrics to develop reading comprehension skills, using graffiti to explore vocabulary, or investigating the relationship between music and math.

1. I am a:

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

2. What is your age?

- ○ 18 - 29
- ○ 30 - 39
- ○ 40 - 49
- ○ 50 - 59
- ○ 60 or older

3. Please describe your race/ethnicity.

- [ ] White
- [ ] Black or African American
- [ ] Latino or Hispanic American
- [ ] Native American
- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Pacific Islander
- [ ] Multiracial/Other (please specify)

4. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ○ Less than high school degree
- ○ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ○ Some college but no degree
- ○ Associate degree
- ○ Bachelor degree
- ○ Graduate degree

5. The subject(s) I teach is:

- [ ] Language Arts
- [ ] Mathematics
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Social Studies
- [ ] Extracurricular (Art, Physical Education, etc.)

Other (please specify)

6. How long have you been teaching?

- 0 - 4 years
- 5 - 9 years
- 10 - 14 years
- 15 - 20 years
- 20 years or more

7. What is your overall perception of Hip Hop?

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

8. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following items or mark "Not Applicable".

The elements of Hip Hop culture can be integrated in the classroom to enhance:

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
retention	○	○	○	○	○	○
engagement	○	○	○	○	○	○
academic performances	○	○	○	○	○	○
standardized test scores	○	○	○	○	○	○

***9. Would you be interested in learning how to integrate Hip Hop culture in the classroom? Why or why not?**

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Personal Background:

What's your name?

Where do you teach?

How would you describe your school (mission, philosophy, etc.)?

How long have you been teaching?

Describe the demographics of your classroom or program. (grade level, ethnicity, gender)

What's your philosophy on education?

Hip Hop Culture:

Who's on your playlist right now?

How would you define Hip Hop Culture? What does it mean to you?

What are your perceptions of Hip Hop Culture?

Have you ever used Hip Hop in the classroom?

If yes, how do/did you use it in the classroom (subject, activities, etc)?

How did the children respond (retention, engagement, academic performance)?

Did you find using Hip Hop pedagogy more effective than traditional teaching methods? Why/Why not?

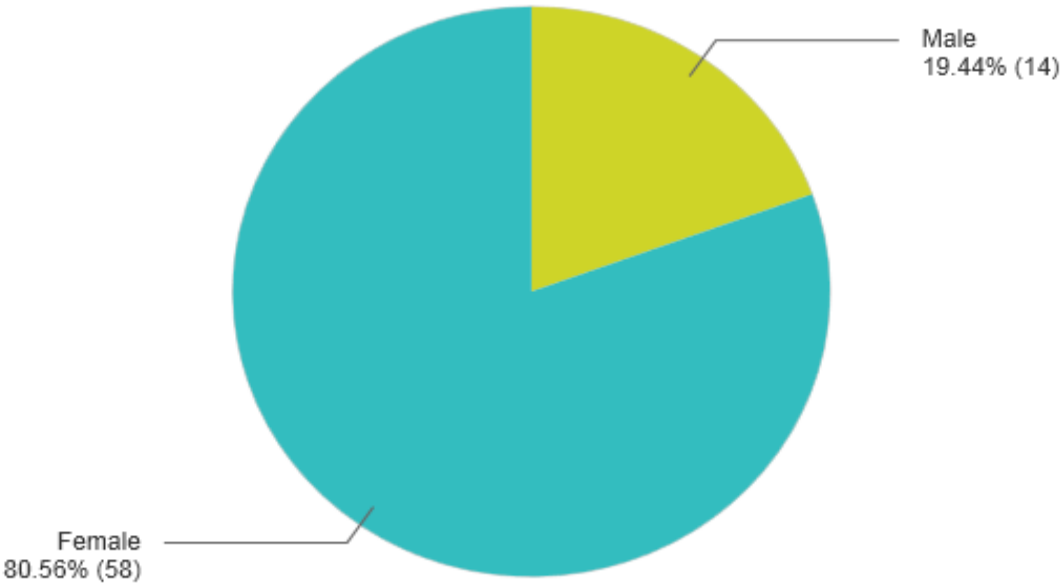
Would you be willing to share or receive lessons from other teachers utilizing Hip Hop in the classroom?

Appendix C – Data Results (Online Survey)

Hip Hop Integration: A Pedagogical Tool for Culturally Responsive Teaching

I am a:

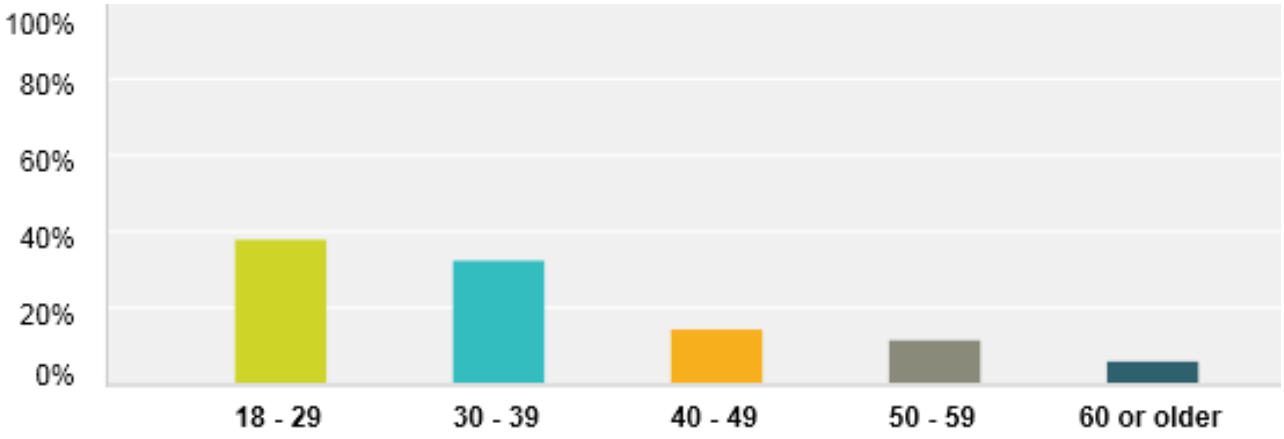
Answered: 72 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
Male	**19.44%** 14
Female	**80.56%** 58
Total	72

What is your age?

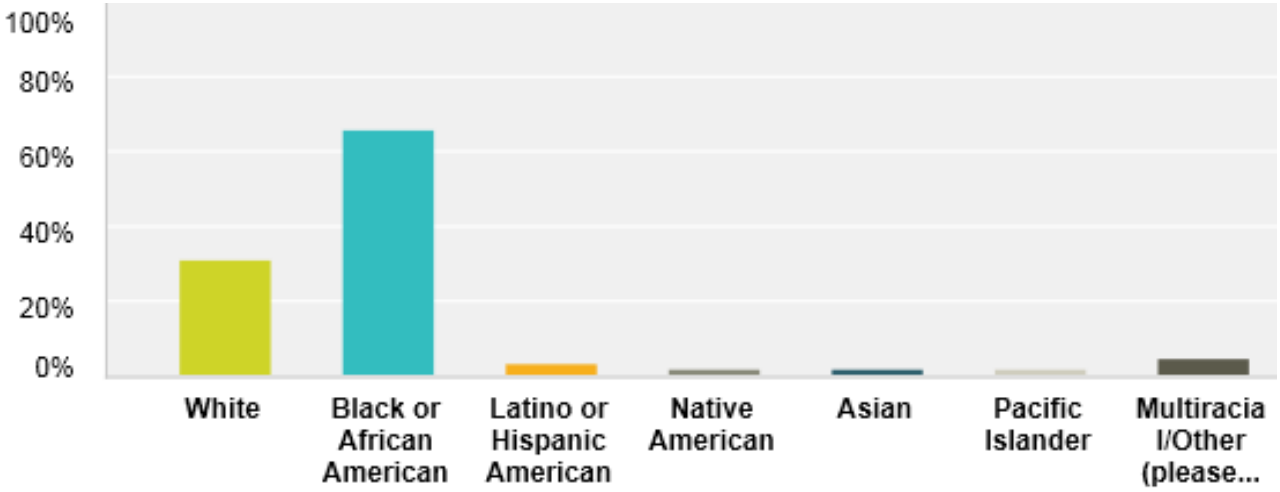
Answered: 72 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
18 – 29	**37.50%** 27
30 – 39	**31.94%** 23
40 – 49	**13.89%** 10
50 – 59	**11.11%** 8
60 or older	**5.56%** 4
Total	72

Please describe your race/ethnicity.

Answered: 72 Skipped: 1

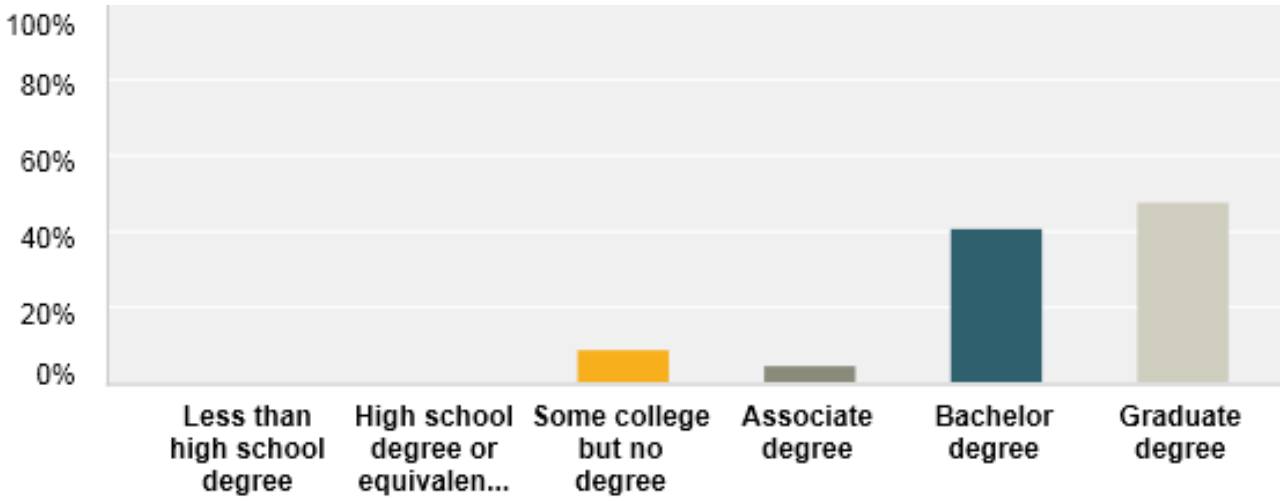


Answer Choices	Responses
White	**30.56%** 22
Black or African American	**65.28%** 47
Latino or Hispanic American	**2.78%** 2
Native American	**1.39%** 1
Asian	**1.39%** 1
Pacific Islander	**1.39%** 1
Multiracial/Other (please specify) Euro-American! South American Native Indian and Spanish	**4.17%** 3

Total Respondents: 72

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 1

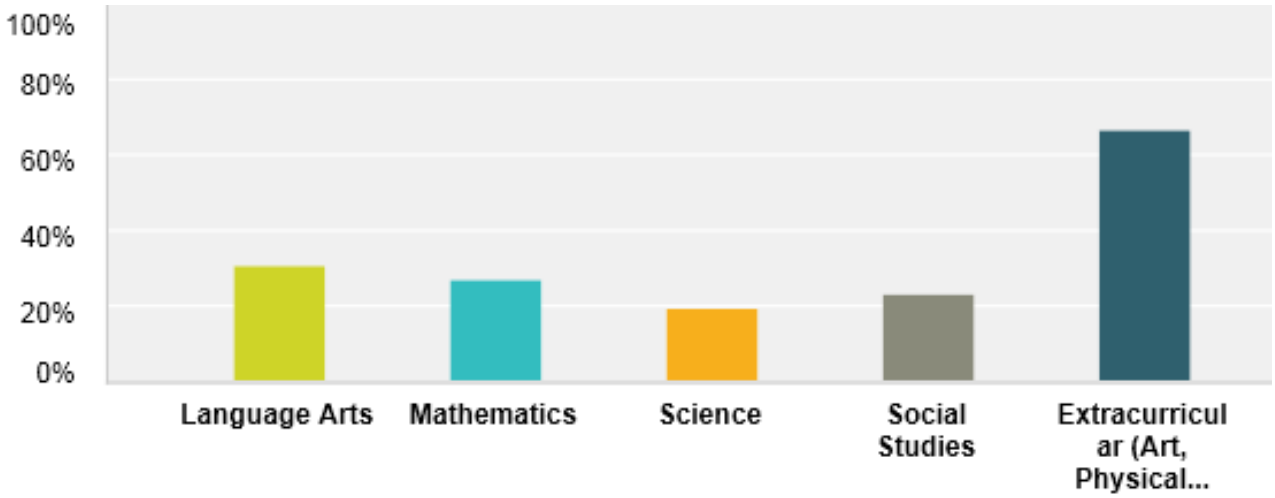


Answer Choices	Responses
Less than high school degree	**0%** 0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	**0%** 0
Some college but no degree	**8.33%** 6

Associate degree	**4.17%** 3
Bachelor degree	**40.28%** 29
Graduate degree	**47.22%** 34
Total	72

The subject(s) I teach is:

Answered: 53 Skipped: 20



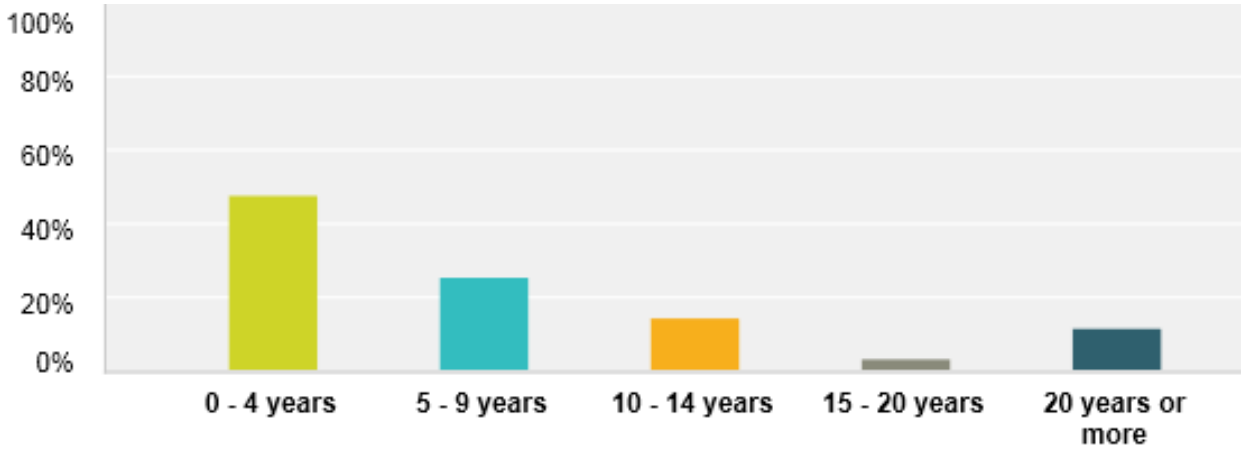
Answer Choices	Responses
Language Arts	**30.19%** 16

Mathematics	**26.42%** 14
Science	**18.87%** 10
Social Studies	**22.64%** 12
Extracurricular (Art, Physical Education, etc.)	**66.04%** 35
Total Respondents: 53	
Other (please specify) (27)	

visual arts
All
art
Creative Writing
all elementary - Principal
Fine Arts
Studio art,drawing, ceramics
Special Education
All Subjects
All of the above
art
Visual art
Art
also, photography
Principal
Early Childhood Education
Theatre
Elementary
AVID
English Composition and Literature
after school programs
Philosophy
all except physical education and art. (elementary education educator)
elementary education
EC Resource English
Post school day activities
Special Education all subjects

How long have you been teaching?

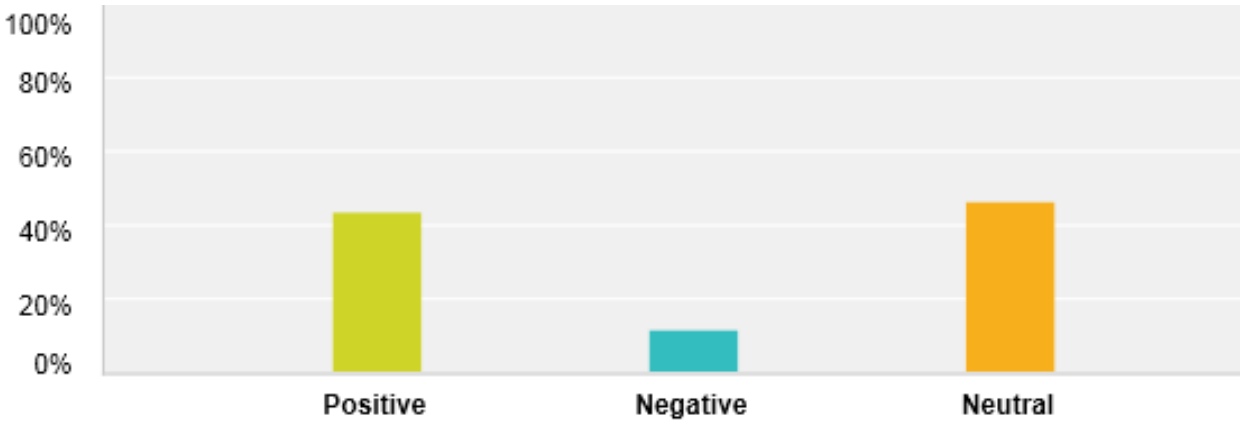
Answered: 72 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
0 - 4 years	**47.22%** 34
5 - 9 years	**25%** 18
10 - 14 years	**13.89%** 10
15 - 20 years	**2.78%** 2
20 years or more	**11.11%** 8
Total	72

What is your overall perception of Hip Hop?

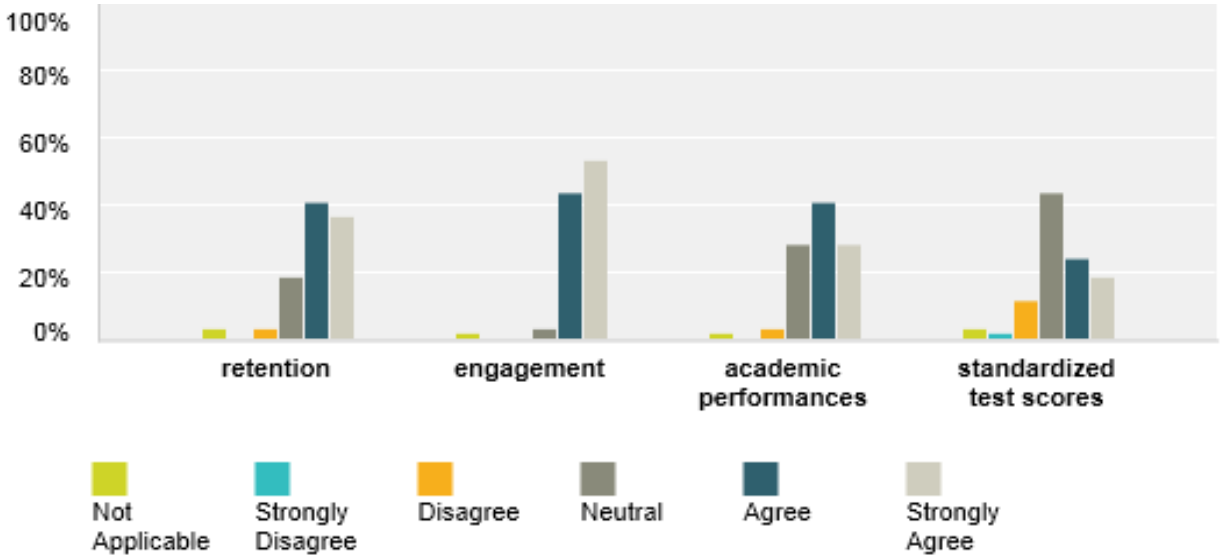
Answered: 72 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
Positive	**43.06%** 31
Negative	**11.11%** 8
Neutral	**45.83%** 33
Total	72

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following items or mark "Not Applicable". The elements of Hip Hop culture can be integrated in the classroom to enhance:

Answered: 72 Skipped: 1



	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Average Rating
retention	**2.78%** 2	**0%** 0	**2.78%** 2	**18.06%** 13	**40.28%** 29	**36.11%** 26	72	4.01
engagement	**1.39%** 1	**0%** 0	**0%** 0	**2.78%** 2	**43.06%** 31	**52.78%** 38	72	4.44
academic performances	**1.39%** 1	**0%** 0	**2.78%** 2	**27.78%** 20	**40.28%** 29	**27.78%** 20	72	3.89
standardized test scores	**2.78%** 2	**1.39%** 1	**11.11%** 8	**43.06%** 31	**23.61%** 17	**18.06%** 13	72	3.38

Would you be interested in learning how to integrate Hip Hop culture in the classroom? Why or why not?

Showing 73 **responses**

Yes, in order to get the students interested and to have a dialogue with them. Communication goes both ways. We need to reach out to them by incorporating something they are interested in and can relate to. We also need to teach our subjects in a way they are more likely to retain the information and most importantly we need to grasp their attention and motivation. It would making learning more enjoyable for the students and thus the teacher.
1/29/2013 5:18 PM

Yes, I still remember some rhymes from school that helped me remember things.
1/28/2013 7:30 PM

I don't mind learning how to incorporate hip hop in my classroom.
1/23/2013 11:57 AM

Sure, I'm always open to new ideas.
1/23/2013 11:29 AM

yes.
1/22/2013 9:02 PM

normally I would, but as I'm a doctoral student right now, I'd probably not use it in a classroom.
1/22/2013 8:35 PM

Sure. If it keeps my students' attention and interest, why not?
1/22/2013 2:22 PM

Yes! I can always use supplemental resources to connect students to learning!
1/22/2013 2:15 AM

Yes, it seems like a field that has a growing presence in the academic world.
1/20/2013 1:19 PM

Of course
1/19/2013 2:38 PM

no
1/19/2013 7:29 AM

Yes - I like hip-hop and rap a lot, but my knowledge is thin. I know early rap styles, but haven't followed closely in 15 years, so could use a syllabus or mix

CD of songs/artists that might be useful ... (with lyrics, if possible).
1/18/2013 4:52 PM

Yes, because it would enhance student motivation to learn academic subjects
1/17/2013 8:17 PM

Maybe depending on the concept
1/17/2013 7:58 PM

Yes. It is a relevant part of my students' lives and can be utilized to engage and retain interest.
1/17/2013 7:45 PM

it may help the students retain information better.
1/17/2013 7:44 PM

Yes. Since students are already in tuned to the culture and learn the lyrics of these songs quickly. I believe then, that if the content in put into hip hop rhythm, students will be more actively engaged and retain more.
1/17/2013 4:40 PM

Perhaps, I teach art at THEARC in SE DC and I feel that this may interest some of my students.
1/17/2013 3:50 PM

Yes, I believe learning through music and song/poetry is very powerful regardless of the discipline.
1/17/2013 3:41 PM

No
1/17/2013 2:12 PM

No. At first, I thought that it may have a positive impact, however it would be difficult to integrate this form of culture when there is more of a negative perception of Hip Hop than a positive one.
1/17/2013 2:02 PM

Absolutely. Primarily because I know you and have seen some of your work.
1/17/2013 11:40 AM

I think that to differentiate lessons to accommodate different learners, a diversified approach would work well. Anything that appeals to the interests of the learner should increase engagement.
1/17/2013 11:08 AM

I think Hip Hop and other musical genre can help students find their "voice."

Music has a way of helping students address and discuss challenging societal dilemmas.
1/17/2013 9:32 AM

Yes. The young culture see view hip-Hop, no different than I saw R&B or better yet, the Spoken Word. Though I believe in my generation, the spoken word was far more powerful, because in most cases, it specifically spoke to or addressed the problems of the black community, and in general, was positive toward women. However, and unfortunately, if and when these elements are consistently infused into hip hop, and Hip-Hop refused to be co-opted by merchants of profit, just as with the Spoken Word, it too will disappear from mainstream,
1/17/2013 6:54 AM

yes, potentially- provides another tool to engage and contextualize information that would be otherwise foreign or uninteresting to some students.
1/17/2013 4:30 AM

Sure. Students are quite influence by Hip-Hop and it can be used as a tool to connect with the "younger generation" (i.e. our students and even our children in some instances.
1/17/2013 3:16 AM

Yes because Hip Hop culture can be an academic delivery system to teach children everything
1/17/2013 1:55 AM

Yes, it would allow unique and creative learning experience and environment for students and teacher, and allow exploration.
1/17/2013 12:24 AM

As an avid listener of classic hip hop and R&B, I would be interested in how to integrate hip hop culture into the classroom HOWEVER please specify if this American hip hop culture into American schools or international hip hop cultures into international school settings or any combination. I do think that there are many positive ways that hip hop can be integrated into the classroom but there are also many things about hip hop culture that are not appropriate for students to be exposed to inside of school in addition to what they absorb when they leave (drugs, violence, objectification of women, etc.)
1/16/2013 11:24 PM

I would without doubt be interested in learning how to integrate hip hop because I know I will have many students who consider themselves part of that culture. Having grown up in a culture outside of hip hop I have only picked up on the popular or newsworthy parts of hip hop. I want to be able to identify with that culture more, understand/know more of the intricacies and subcultures within it, I would like to become an active consumer because it is very much a large part of

American culture today. I know that if I want to encourage the students I have to become active consumers of hip hop, to really take apart and analyze the world that they are apart of, I need to be able to as well.
1/16/2013 11:17 PM

Yes because it can be an offspring of english and physical education. It can also be used for learning comprehension for test taking
1/16/2013 10:45 PM

Yes! Would love to incorporate hip hop with visual art! I think my students would appreciate the style, flow, expression and current voice.
1/16/2013 9:45 PM

I think it would be an interesting way to integrate the arts in the classroom, depending on the classroom environment. I think teaching within the cultural context of the students is extremely important.
1/16/2013 9:16 PM

Yes, the students I teach find hip-hop entrancing and I would love to incorporate things they enjoy in the learning process.
1/16/2013 8:40 PM

Yes, it's a large part of culture today so there is no reason one should not try to incorporate it appropriately.
1/16/2013 8:39 PM

Yes, in order to be relevant in today's classroom we have to use the culture that our students know and live in.
1/16/2013 8:24 PM

not particularly because the hip hop culture has not influenced my own skill set so i would not be qualified to use the culture adequately enought to have a positive effect on my students
1/16/2013 8:24 PM

Yes. It is the new language of our youth's culture.
1/13/2013 11:38 PM

Yes, i would be interested in learning more because the majority of students I work with have a strong relationship with hip-hop music and culture. They are constantly demanding that I bring "their" music into the classroom during group work sessions so overt applications like just playing hip hop while students paint to keep them enthusiastic can be helpful. I'm curious about core curriculum integration as well, like using hip hop themed lessons for vocabulary retention studying grammar through rappers lyrics and thier use of various linguistic tools, etc.

1/11/2013 3:36 AM

Yes. It is my belief that as an educator the one must be able to introduce various mediums to ensure that the students are engaged, participating and learning. One must be able to introduce methods that the student can relate too. Hip-Hop is a medium that transcends cultures, ethnic groups and countries.
1/10/2013 9:38 AM

Yes, I am interested in learning more strategies on integrating Hip-Hop culture because of it's rich urban visual tradition.
1/10/2013 2:06 AM

I would be interested because music is one of the greatest tools used in our society to influence individuals, in all aspects of life. A Hip-hop curriculum would serve as a cultural balance for youth, and also help make them more open to learning and the overall learning process.
1/10/2013 1:16 AM

I use it to teach Shakespeare...so yes.
1/10/2013 12:44 AM

Yes. I am always open to anything different from the "traditional" (lecture style) ways of teaching. For Black students in particular, integrating hip hop into the classroom would help to keep their interest.
1/10/2013 12:44 AM

Yes
1/10/2013 12:41 AM

Yes, I would love ot integrate the music in the classroom because it will help our children to to get excited for learning, for example math, learning addition, multiplication etc, in hip hop music. The students will learn it faster than teaching it in the tradition way.
1/10/2013 12:37 AM

Absolutely, there are so many elements of Hip-hop music that fascinate me. It is also a familiar cultural language that my students are steeped in. To ignore it is to ignore their cultural identity as human beings.
1/9/2013 3:41 AM

Yes. It would be a great way to engage children and for them to learn at the same time.
1/8/2013 5:16 PM

Yes, because in order to teach you have to first relate and then captivate.
1/8/2013 2:40 PM

No...Although it is a form of art, I think there is a lot of negativity associated with it and its underlying themes.
1/8/2013 11:44 AM

High interest topic that engages student, in all aspects of literacy.
1/8/2013 1:42 AM

I would be interested in learning how to incorporate more elements into my room because it would be accessible to the students.
1/8/2013 1:08 AM

i teach college courses and my current demographic is the generation before and during the onset of the hip hop era. The way I currently integrate hip hop culture in my classroom through discussion of the social and cultural implications of hip hop when used positively, and also when it is misappropriated.
1/8/2013 12:22 AM

children respond and keep interest when they are interested in the topic...in my experiece if I can make the lesson related to something they can grasp in every day life or some how make it a fun topic they will engage the learning process
1/7/2013 9:58 PM

If it improves student performance , we are for it.
1/7/2013 9:47 PM

It depends on the course content.
1/7/2013 9:24 PM

Yes because I'm always open to learning about different ways to keep my students engaged in the classroom.
1/7/2013 9:15 PM

Yes, I am an advocate for 'culurally relevant pedogogy' and subscribe to the theory that learning begins with interest.
1/7/2013 9:04 PM

Yes, I feel that many youth can benefit from learning about Hip Hop Culture. Especially those who live aspects of Hip Hop in their day-to-day life.
1/7/2013 7:08 PM

Yes.
1/7/2013 6:55 PM

yes
1/7/2013 6:51 PM

No. Not a fan although i know its what the younger generation prefers.
1/7/2013 5:58 PM

No
1/7/2013 2:13 PM

Yes and no. Yes because I have seen what the integration does for students' interest in a subject. No because I have seen "hip hop" trainings at conventions by people who do not have much knowledge of the culture other than what they've read in pamphlets.
1/6/2013 10:42 PM

Yes
1/6/2013 7:32 PM

No I do it already
1/6/2013 5:55 PM

Yes, because I am always looking for new ways to reach my students.
1/6/2013 5:32 PM

It could provide students to learn in a more interesting way.
1/6/2013 4:59 PM

Yes, to help engaged students further.
1/6/2013 3:28 PM

Yes I would. I believe that in order for students to retain, they have to be able to connect to the content. With Hip Hop culture being so popular among all cultures, I feel that it is a good way to keep students engaged.
1/6/2013 3:20 PM

yes I feel children of today respond to it, enjoy it and can relate to it.
1/6/2013 3:04 PM

Yes.....help engage
1/6/2013 2:34 PM

Appendix D – Interview Transcription (Dr. Thandi Hicks-Harper)

The interview began with Dr. Hicks-Harper asking about my background and a brief bio. From then I started to record the conversation.

TH: Okay. Two things I want to say—

JV: Sure

TH: What you said, number one, it's interesting that you're at Roots because in 198— how old are you?

JV: I'm thirty-one

TH: In 1987, I did my Master's thesis from Howard University and it was first [INAUDIBLE 4:29], if you will, first research-based thesis that took a look at rap music for pedagogy.

JV: Right, yeah I was—

TH: So, this was in 1987 so a lot of my thesis—

JV: Wow.

TH: — started before rap was even allowed on MTV.

JV: Right.

TH: This particular study, it was called 'A Relationship between Rap Music and Learning Retention in the Urban Preschool' I'm tying this all together. It was a quantitative study and Roots was one of my core preschools that I used as a part of the study.

JV: Oh really?

TH: Roots was a part of the first thesis, if you will, and mind you, worldwide that looked at rap music for pedagogy.

JV: Wow

TH: So like I said, that was in 1987 and I incorporated three schools and went into Roots and I can't remember the brother's name but they were kind enough to allow me to work with their preschoolers as a part of the study. This means a lot to me, that coming back to Roots again—

JV: Full circle, yes ma'am.

TH: Speaking to you, this really—and this is at the heart of what I do now on various levels. I just wanted to bring that up that – and I did find as part of this study that there's a significant difference at the [INAUDIBLE 6:05] level and students that were receiving instructions via rap music and those who were receiving instruction via verbal conversational speech and I inferred that rap music motivated the children to practice. I did a T-test and that showed that big significant difference and this was consistent across the schools that I did this with, did the study with. I created the instruments, the tools; back then it was a VHS, a VHS and then my daughter, Starr, because I asked her about you, because you know her from somewhere.

JV: Yeah, I don't know if you're familiar with the organization that she's in, Swing Phi Swing; I'm in the brother organization Groove Phi Groove Social Fellowship Incorporated. So that's how we know each other.

TH: Okay, okay. I asked her about you even before— I wasn't going to respond to you, but I said "Who is this?" then she told me about you, but anyway, I think that's very significant as a part of your thesis to even mention that this study was done at Roots in 1987—

JV: Wow

TH: —and it will definitely was definitely the first study because even at Howard University they really kicked back in terms of why did I just want to study about Black kids? Why do our people want to study about rap music period?

JV: Right.

TH: This is a fad, it's not going to last; where am I going with this? I know I sound really young, but I'm 58 years old, okay. So by this time I have my family, I'm not playing around. This is what I want to do because I went back to Howard after teaching school for twelve years. I went to Howard after teaching school for twelve years in New Jersey. I'm right across the bridge from New York and my son, he's older than you, came into rap music and we connected with it on a whole other level. That's the reason I decided that I wanted to study it, because I saw that it was captivating the attention of young people and –

JV: Right

TH: —and using it as an educator.

JV: Who were some of the early elders that you went to, because especially during that time it was very prominent even though people thought it was a fad the late 80's early 90's— you said it was eighty—

TH: '87 but I –

JV: '87, right.

TH: – but I'm going back to the like 1980.

JV: Okay, okay. Yeah, so that's very early then. Yeah.

TH: So it was starting to breathe.

JV: Right, right. Just starting out as far as getting it to the masses because it started in the 70's but people started to get more exposure to it during the early 80's because I remember growing up, I was born in 1981, and the first exposure I got to it was a movie called Beat Street. That's when the West Coast kind of—because I was living in San Francisco at that time and that way kind of our first exposure during like '83, '84. You taking an interest in that at such an early stage is highly important because look where we're at now in regards to Hip Hop culture and how much has evolved and changed, and just to think that people didn't even think that it was going to last that long that says a lot about how you viewed the youth and their relevance to what they were bringing to the table and society as a whole.

TH: To answer your question, back then—and even my PhD, this is my Master's and my PhD is from the University of Maryland, I continued to study it after they was going to pay for my education. Now I'm grown, I'm married, I have children and so forth but I went full time to get my PhD. As a part of this whole effort, I interviewed Heavy D—

JV: Wow.

TH: — Even Afrika Bambaataa, [INAUDIBLE 10:36] I don't know if you remember them?

JV: Yeah, yeah.

TH: Okay, okay, okay.

JV: I mean, because I have older—I have two older brothers so everything that they were into I was getting first-hand experience and learning from them too, even at an early age even if I didn't understand everything now that I'm older I'm like 'oh, so that's who that was' or –

TH: mmh hmm

JV: – you know, mm hmm. Yeah, definitely.

TH: All of—I mean Salt N' Pepa, anybody who was current. Any, any….and athletes, and actually Bambaataa gave me—because this was, my PhD was ethnography.

JV: Okay.

TH: Okay?

JV: Mm hmm.

TH: So it's qualitative and my Master's was quantitative and so Bam even giving me the okay and opening the door—

JV: Right.

TH: – for me to interview some of the greats back then and some of them that didn't even make it uh—

JV: Right.

TH: – was really significant because he believed in me and you know, going across Bronx projects and smelling Somali Rose in little apartment and then him with the African Zulu Nation looking out for me and stuff it was um very very significant as far as me getting access you know–

JV: Right. Beautiful. So, can I ask you a question ma'am?

TH: Please ask me anything, I mean I know I'm— you know, 'cause.

JV: No, no, no. I appreciate it and I want you to give me as much insight, knowledge and experiences as possible. The only reason I'm saying that is because I do have a set of questions, but I love the organic style and I don't want to stick—I don't want to feel too structured but I do want to get certain things out of you just to kind of coincide with what

I'm trying to research and then please feel free to, do not hold anything back. Just expand on, you know, whatever you want to expand on and we'll just go with the flow. If that's okay.

TH: Oh, that's, I mean, you know Hip Hop is non-linear too so—

JV: That's right. So who are you listening to now? Are you listening to anybody um who's still involved in the Hip Hop culture, or?

TH: Oh yeah, oh yeah, no question about it. I have to listen to it because if I'm saying that—because my belief is that any type of Hip Hop music if you will, could be used as a tool to educate. Regardless of who it is, if it's down home dirty cursing you out, whatever, it can be used as a tool to educate and to explore. You take the—you take it and you analyze it and bring it before young people and you talk about maybe what you shouldn't be doing, or maybe what you should be doing better—

JV: Right, right.

TH: –or having a critical eye towards, and see, that's the key. We can't be negative about it if we're really not listening to it intentionally—

JV: Exactly.

TH: Even like Jay-Z's book 'Decoded', it's a really really good book that breaks down—I don't know if you've read it or not but—

JV: Yeah, I've read it.

TH: Okay, so you see where it breaks down so many things that you think you heard, but you hear, hear that because it's all coded.

JV: Exactly. Yeah.

TH: If you're gonna really talk about Hip Hop for pedagogy, if you're going to talk about Hip Hop period, you know, it's important that you be informed so I listen to it all. I really do. I listen to it all, from I listen to a lot of Tupac, I listen to a lot of the old stuff but in time I incorporate some of, some of the new stuff only because um I'm a zumba instructor.

JV: Yeah, I saw that too on your Facebook, yeah.

TH: Huh?

JV: I saw that on your Facebook too, you're just into a lot of things, huh?

TH: Yeah, I put what I like in there—

JV: Right.

TH: It relates to the young people—

JV: mm hmm

TH: – hence the old school and then it relates to some of the older people, older people that are in there.

JV: Right.

TH: I like K.R.I.T., I like almost everybody. That's the thing, it can be useful. Everybody—

JV: Hello?

TH: Yeah, I'm here.

JV: Oh, okay. So how would you define Hip Hop culture? If you could give your own kind of definition how would you define it?

TH: Okay. Hip Hop culture, okay in a very distinctive slight way—because I really believe that if the culture is complex, so you just really can't define it in one sentence.

JV: Right.

TH: Hip Hop culture, it's a culture period. It's a culture, it's a movement. Any way that that you describe, when you talk about culture you're talking about um different young people, or older people now, a sense of belonging and behaving in certain ways. It's amoeba-like in nature, meaning that it's constantly changing while at the same time there are things in Hip Hop culture that remain the same.

JV: Right.

TH: However, when you define culture, you can just take the same definition that you used to define culture; a way of life, a tradition, a sense of belonging, you know, values—you can use that same definition and define Hip Hop culture. Those still roles do exist with this culture.

JV: Right, right.

TH: So, It's not just rap music, as you know. Culture's bigger than that. You know, um it has to do with the way folks look at the world, the way they perceive and connote things that are being said. It's that fact. It's very difficult—and even if I do a lecture or I'm talking about it I really like to just start from culture—

JV: Right.

TH: — then move to popular culture, you know, then move to Hip Hop culture in order to make sure that folks really really get the jist of it.

JV: Right. I mean, I agree whole-heartedly. I think one of my main emphasis is not only that it's a culture but it's merely a continuation of previous cultures and traditions, you know that carried on, even if you want to go all the way back to Africa, you know? And that's something that I've always wanted—because I am at an African-centered school,

so I always try to tell them 'the things that you are doing is relevant because it's tied in to your ancestry and traditionalism from Africa to the Americas, you know, just in a different context. So, some of the things you are doing you may not be conscious of, that it's embedded in you but it definitely is and it's just merely a continuation of that spirit and that energy just in a different condition you know so— but when you say African culture, I mean it's the second largest continent in the world so even confining it to this African culture because it's so many cultures within African culture it can be so complex to even say that but I think that, especially for young Blacks and Latino's to start somewhere so that they can see you know, how you know the things that they are doing are relevant and eventually and has been impacting the world because it's universal, you know?

TH: Oh, no question, and you cannot, you cannot really talk about and I'm totally in agreement with you and I'm trying to see— get to the jist of what you need to get for your research, okay but let me say this and this is all relative; you cannot talk about Hip Hop culture without talking about the traditions of African people. It is impossible to talk about Jay-Z without talking about griots—

JV: Right.

TH: Jay-Z is obviously a contemporary griot living in America and that's the way I like to talk about Hip Hop artist today, particularly rap music artist because they are speaking the language of what's happening in their village.

JV: Right.

TH: You see, the same way that griots did. Part of what I was—and I'm probably answering some of your questions as we talk.

JV: Yeah, you are. You are.

TH: What, what I did and what I continue to do is to juxtapose Hip Hop culture with the nine dimensions that represent the African worldview. You familiar with them, right?

JV: No ma'am.

TH: Okay, there's nine dimensions that represents a cultural lifestyle that's inherent in the ethos of Black people throughout the world. These nine dimensions I go to talk about it quite a bit in the research and it's probably real important for you to take a look at.

JV: Okay.

TH: I'll make sure you get a copy of my dissertation.

JV: That would be a wonderful thing. Thank you.

TH: There are nine dimensions and I juxtapose these nine dimensions of traditional African culture that manifested in African American culture, okay? Within the culture. So, it speaks to like spirituality, [INAUDIBLE 20:08] and movement, you know like harmony and affect, communalism, etcetera, morality—

JV: Right.

TH: the things of that nature, so when you look at it, even when you're talking about Latino's, okay, when you look at those nine dimensions and you look at Hip Hop culture, you see those elements existing within Hip Hop culture.

JV: Right, right.

TH: So when you're talking about Hip Hop, you really can't ignore where it really came—we know it didn't just happen.

JV: Right.

TH: That's just that. It's a movement, and it's a continuous movement that starts from the beginning of time.

JV: Right. Wow.

TH: Alright, I'll be quiet. I really—

JV: No, No. Thank you for that insight. I mean that's—I definitely want to look into that because everything that you're saying I whole-heartedly agree with I'm—just for you to kind of re-emphasize that and take it to another level I think would be good not only for my own understanding, but for the research as well, you know? Because I want to put all that in there, you know? I truly do believe that this conversation is meant for a reason, I believe cosmic connections with my students. I don't take anything as accidents, I don't find it ironic at all that you are involved with Roots and so the things that you were telling me and the things that you are mentioning, you know, I'm definitely taking heed to and I appreciate you giving me your insight and your input on it.

TH: No question. I'm here to be of service to you today.

JV: So when you first started to kind of incorporate it into the classroom, can you kind of describe— was it a specific class? Like when you were doing your study— like say for instance roots Activity Learning Center, you used this school as kind of um kind of test the grounds and do some of your research, correct? Was Roots the only school, or were there other schools as well?

TH: Yeah, there was two. First of all Roots was not the beginning, okay like I said, I taught school for twelve years.

JV: Right.

TH: So, I'm in the classroom, I see Hip Hop booming all around' okay. My son is trying to be a rapper, you know. I'm kind of bombarded with it and it just sounded like a deep bass kick that I didn't want to hear. Then I was like, wait, hold up; there has to be some good in this. My mother always told me there's some good in everything.

JV: Right, right.

TH: as an educator, I'm wide open, so with my spirit um my spirit was saying 'explore, see what's up with this thing' and so I was seeing my son using the dictionary, thesaurus trying to rhyme stuff. Then my eyes opened, I'm like 'hey!' you know, he's looking in these books more than he ever has.

JV: Right. Wow.

TH: That's relevant to what I know my mission in life is, which is positive youth engagement and education.

JV: Right.

TH: So, that was that and then in the classroom environment, I'm seeing that I could use some of what I called—I called it 'the formal features of Hip Hop culture' and what the formal feature represent, they're characteristics of the culture that can be manifested in the original Hip Hop art, okay, manifested within technology, manifested whether it's color, whether it's tied to the youth. I have this whole list of formal features—I've been doing this a long time, so call me back if you need to because I—

JV: No.

TH:– am passionate about this just like you are. These formal features, I looked at them and I was like how can I use this in my classroom? Then I started doing it in my classroom, making it apply to my lesson plans until the principal said "What is this?

What are you doing?" They really didn't want me to do that, understanding that I was one of the most creative teachers that they had then I just started doing it anyway, but not putting it into my lesson plans.

JV: Right. Hmmm.

TH: They asked me to do an assembly program for Black History Month and it seemed I could pull something together with this so-called Hip Hop, now mind you, this is like '80, this is way back. This is like late 70's, okay, so you know they weren't all the way down with it. That's the beginning of it. I decided that I would leave New Jersey, and I said I was Black, let me just come to D.C. and maybe I could get my Master's, so I left the New Jersey school system. I was in Patterson, New Jersey, I don't know if you're familiar with it.

JV: Yeah, I have a really good friend from Patterson.

TH: So, Patterson, New Jersey, I left there, and I came to D.C. and they accepted me in a Master's program. I told them what I wanted to study, I told you what they said about it and I found Oscar Gandy, who is a renowned communications scholar um, he just left there, that really saw value in my research. That's when he said, 'let's make it quantitative', because quantitative at the time, and even now is held in high esteem when it comes to science-based research.

JV: Right.

TH: He said, 'let's make it quantitative' and that's when we came together to figure out what I would study in the preschool environment. I was at Roots, and I have to get—I can't remember off-hand, but two other preschools that I can let you know if you really need to know, because it's in my thesis. I don't remember off-hand, there were three

schools that I went to, to you know, comparison contrast and to see if I was going to actually get the same results and my experimental design, you know, control group, etcetera. I did get the same results. Roots was actually one of the schools.

JV: Okay, so most of the students that you introduced it to, you know, as far as in the classroom were most of them African Americans? What were like the demographics like? Especially like in New Jersey when you kind of first started it? You know, what grade were they in?

TH: Okay I'm trying—

JV: And what were some of the demographics that, like was it all you know, the ethnic groups? The grade levels? So on and so forth.

TH: Um, the school Yugoslavian, Yugoslavian, Latino's and Black predominately.

JV: Okay

TH: Okay, then in the High School environment, there were predominately Latino and Blacks—for the most, and Whites at that time. Now it's totally different, you know the High School in 'Lean On Me'?

JV: Yeah

TH: Okay, that's the school.

JV: Oh! Okay.

TH: Yes, so demographics— second grade, second, third, fourth grade. Um, then in the High School, it was older grades in the High School. I'm missing some other demographics. I was used as a basic skills instructor, so a lot of them were at the bottom when it comes to academic achievement; which is what I saw that district was and that's why— that's when culturally responsive pedagogy comes in while really looking for

something that was efficient to them and also looking for something that could relate to their already existing social glue.

JV: Right.

TH: What would it be, because the existing congruence between home and school culture is critical. It's just critical, period.

JV: Right.

TH: And so I recognized that as a young— as an educator and um and that's why I started incorporating all of that.

JV: Okay.

TH: Right now, we have a science-based Hip Hop curriculum that I wrote. It's the first um to clerically demonstrate the positive effects of adolescent cognition and behavior. It's called 'Hip Hop to Prevent Substance Abuse and HIV'.

JV: Okay.

TH: Um. What's really significant about it, it's the first Hip Hop curriculum to ever be sanctioned by the federal government. Right now, it's on what's called NREPP, it's the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. It's a department of Health and Human Services registry. It targets middle school students and the whole emphasis is on substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention, but using Hip Hop culture as a contextual backdrop. That goes into what's called 'Hip Hop Development', which is a theory of change that I actually coined and it's a trademark. I coined in the year 2006, basically what it is, it's a theory of change with practical applications that uses like I said, the formal features of Hip Hop culture, right, as the basis for motivating young people to choose healthy lifestyles. Motivating them to strive for academic achievement and not

only that but as the basis for culturally responsive pedagogy, working in churches, you know? You name it; it fits all under what I call Hip Hop Development. It's a serious change in practical application.

JV: Oh, Okay. That's real interesting. And this is more so a community-based effort am I correct?

TH: What's a community-based effort?

JV: I mean it's— is it revolving around like a community center, or are you just um, involved—

TH: What's that?

JV: I'm sorry?

TH: Say it again?

JV: Is it more so involved in a specific community center? Are you concentrating in one location, or is it just pretty much widespread all over?

TH: Are you talking about Hip Hop Development, the theory of change? Or are you talking about the curriculum?

JV: Well, just the curriculum itself, where have you been implementing it at?

TH: Oh, the curriculum is national.

JV: Okay, wow. I'm gonna have to look into that.

TH: Yeah, it's like I said; it's science-based and it's on the national registry of evidence-based programs and practices. So when you get a grant, or a federal contract, or if you get any kind of contract and they say what you're doing has to have some evidence-based outcomes to it, right? You have to pick from somewhere that has evidence-based

outcomes, so if it's a federal grant, right? You have a list of all these different curriculums and all these different programs inside this national registry, right?

JV: Right. Okay.

TH: You have to pick something that has a science-base, so you have folks all over the country using the curriculum.

JV: Wow, that's beautiful. Wow, that's powerful. I need to look into that. I wasn't aware of that. That's something new. The reason why I'm kind of interested in it is because Roots Activity Learning Center it's a hands-on science, they have a hands-on science curriculum. You know so that kind of just sparked my interest more because you know, even though I'm kind of incorporated into the classroom I think that if I look into that I might generate some ideas and get some things just from that curriculum to kind of incorporate in the classroom as well, so I'm definitely going to have to check into that. And that's something that you can pretty much find if you contact um—who would I need to contact you know, to get, you know that curriculum, I guess. I don't know if it's in a book, on the Internet or—

TH: Well, it's— okay—

JV: How would I get that?

TH: You can't just get the curriculum, okay because there are trainings and everything associated with it.

JV: Got you, okay.

TH: It's just like giving my mother the curriculum and then she go implement it and she don't know nothing about Hip Hop or anything about it.

JV: Right, right.

TH: So, you can't just get the curriculum.

JV: Gotcha

TH: You have trainings and we can talk more about that, but as the creator of the curriculum and um you can go on let's see, nrepp, N-R-E-P-P.

JV: Okay.

TH: Type that in and then you're going to see a description about it, and —

JV: Okay.

TH: – and you can get some basic information about it.

JV: Right. Okay.

TH: A key point, Jeffrey, is that what you're doing is, is Hip Hop development and that's important for you to put in your research, not only because it's a part of what I've coined; but it's also important because when you talk about youth development and everything this right here is Hip Hop development in education. I would really, really – the word isn't even appreciate uh, it's important to put that in.

JV: Okay. I definitely will.

TH: It's important for – Yeah, it's Hip Hop, Hip Hop development. That's what it is and not only and is that something that I'm putting out there on a major level, whether I speak – I have a book about it too, I can try to make sure you get a book if you want it. Um, um just putting it out there on a level where it becomes a household name.

JV: Is that the 'Hip Hop Development Exploring Hip Hop Culture for Successful Community Building'? That book?

TH: Right.

JV: Is that a – okay.

TH: That one was used for – that speaks from the subject of community building

JV: Right.

TH: And then you have um there's two articles that you, that you might want to look into too.

JV: Okay.

TH: I mean, because you – you're making your point, so anything that's indirectly or directly related is going to be important and useful.

JV: Right.

TH: Um, there's one article in 2007 in The Journal of Youth Development, 'Bridging Research and Practice' um, it's called Hip Hop Development', 'Bridging the Generational Divide for Youth Development'. Okay and um that was in 2007. I was the first author on that one. Then there's – there's a couple of things. I'm sure you're going to find – when you look in the reference list, you're going to find some other stuff.

JV: Okay, sure. I'll definitely, I mean, I'll definitely look into it. I don't want you to wreck your brain trying to think of everything but once – you just gave me the initial thing to look at and now I can just expand that research and look more into it, now it's – especially now that I know the term Hip Hop Development. I'm definitely going to search all around to see you know, whatever has that name within it, so I appreciate you sharing that. So would you say that, especially Hip Hop Development, do you think that this is more effective than these traditional teaching methods and direct instructions and things that people are still trying to do? Do you feel like this pedagogy is more effective in the classroom?

TH: It's not that I feel like it's more effective, I think that it's effective, okay?

JV: Okay.

TH: The reason I why I'm cautious with that is because I've think various kinds of pedagogy, message, materials, instruction, strategies are important to these young people as Blacks and Latino's.

JV: Right.

TH: I think we have to – the fact that we negate um popular culture and sometimes just want to focus in our racial ethnicity as it relates to culture is definitely missing the mark, because as you know Hip Hop goes beyond the Black people.

JV: Right, right, right.

TH: It's definitely missing the mark. My belief is that um we have to look at styles of learning, cognitive styles of learning and when it comes to Blacks and Latino's they're more relational, if you will, in terms of their styles of cognition; the way they think. It's definitely more relational than it is analytical.

JV: Right.

TH: The methods of instruction are more analytical, okay, you with me?

JV: Yes ma'am, yeah, definitely.

TH: Okay, so you know the difference, right?

JV: I do. I definitely know difference. Yes. We're more so from a holistic approach as opposed to divisional and separatism. Yeah.

TH: I don't take anything for granted. Because I'm a good listener, but I'm a educator so I don't take anything for granted. The cultural and social context of teaching and learning should become critical components when it comes to figuring how we're going to best reach out young people.

JV: Yes ma'am.

TH: Um, I don't know if that answered the question?

JV: It does, it does. It definitely does. I mean, because I agree um and I think that they should be exposed, I mean because everybody brings something to the table. Everybody doesn't learn the same way, so even if they do get some kind of exposure to one particular teaching strategy, I just from teaching in my own classroom that to kind of mix it up a little bit and get them exposed to all different forms so that way – my thing is to be better equipped with the tools, knowledge and experience and skills necessary in order to be successful in the classroom but outside of the classroom too. Nothing is, nothing is one-dimensional. You know, so the more that we're exposed to, the more that we'll be; we'll be flexible.

TH: We can't – definitely can't ignore Hip Hop culture

JV: Right.

TH: Young people are – I don't care if you're two. Body parts, that was the focus in terms of the content for this Master's thesis in 1987. Howard University preschool was actually one of the other schools, I just thought of that. Body parts, now is we're just finishing an app. It's called Hip Hop to read, right now because I have a communications company too and from the app to the actual body parts dvd, which is being used in preschools throughout the country right now; that was my Master's thesis. Right? And now it's being used by schools decades later. The Master's thesis, although it has been upgraded, no question but it's still being used and still facilitating learning a couple decades later.

JV: Right.

TH: The importance of taking a look at culture, popular culture particularly because the purpose to add on to what already exists in the mental schema of the individual.

JV: Right

TH: No matter how old you are, so adding that to the experiences that they already bring to the table you know it was important so if you bring to the table that your mother and father or your father or your relatives or you listen to Hip Hop for the vast majority of the day on the radio or your way to Girl Scouts or swimming or whatever you do, you know that becomes a part of who you are and what you're doing and that whole and we go back to movement around the nine dimensions of the African worldview and it's totally connected so it's critical. It's mandatory that if we're going to see any type of moving forward when it comes to academic achievement with Blacks and Latino's we have got to look at popular culture. Listen, young people are having babies younger and younger, you know and what are they feeding into their kids' minds without even knowing it, you know? It becomes a part of what they live and breathe every day. To ignore it is a mistake. The whole research about cultural compatibility hypothesis and that speaks to um understanding the native culture of whoever it is that you're trying to teach and incorporate that into into the classroom, so you know its – okay, next question?

JV: Um I'm listening. I don't want to cut you off and I'm not going to so the only way that you'll stop is if you stop yourself.

TH: I want you – you know I want you to get what you need and –

JV: Yes ma'am

TH: – to know that I'm very interested in what you're doing and definitely want to hear more about it and I'm glad I could provide – let me just say this, is this your Master's or PhD?

JV: Yes ma'am.

TH: This is your Master's?

J.V: Yes.

TH: You always have to say you know who said it and you know and justify sometimes what you might already know –

JV: Right.

TH: Somebody told me this, that and I always said that "Piaget said it", "Vygotsky said it" even [INAUDIBLE 42:23] said it, you know um this is important to recognize when you can say "I said it" but I know that right now you're not at that point so what I'm giving you um is going to help to justi – even though you know it already, some of this stuff you know it already when me as a PhD said it, it means more. Are you following me?

JV: Yes ma'am. I do.

TH: It means more, it only means more because I have a PhD, you understand me? I used to always get mad because I used to have to always justify every single thing in my document you know so I want to give you what you need and wherever you can use what I said you know use it.

JV: Right, and I truly do appreciate it and I don't want to take too much of your time so I just want to say thank you for everything that you've – I just want to say that I'm honored too, really. Because when Star first told me that her mother was involved with some of

the things that I was interested in, you know I didn't know to the extent of what that meant. Beyond what I was reading on your Facebook page and the things information that you're doing beyond just that you know I'm just honored – and I just don't see how you have the time to do everything, that's what I'm really intrigued of. You have all these different projects and things that you're doing it's like I'm struggling as a father and a husband and a teacher and a student. I can just imagine the things that you're juggling and continue to work on it's truly inspiring. I just want to say thank you for taking the time to just give me your insight and experiences and I definitely don't take that for granted and I definitely will acknowledge the thing your studies and your research and the things that you're bringing to the table and how it's an extension of the things that I'm doing. It's truly inspirational so I just want to say thank you for that.

TH: Well, I just want to tell you that you're inspiring. You know, I meet young people that are really really working at it – being a father, being a husband, you know becoming an intellectual or being an intellectual with some of the things that you've done already you know, it's inspiring and it makes you feel good to see young Black men doing good. However I can help, despite my schedule of course I'm – I work 24/7 all the time and still fit zumba in and tennis so –

JV: Wow.

TH: I don't even know what it is and take care of my mother who's almost ninety years old.

JV: That's beautiful, that's a blessing.

TH: You give me inspiration and you give me energy so I really appreciate it. I'm excited; literally, I am excited about what you're doing –

JV: Thank you.

TH: – because we need young people, we need to add to on to the already existing literature.

JV: Right. Yeah.

TH: In this area and people are doing it Jeffrey, but some folks are not recognizing the importance of putting it out there so it's recognized as scholarship, if you will. It's just out there, now a lot of people are using Hip Hop in the classroom. There's a whole lot of it being done –

JV: Right.

TH: – however, when you don't um and I'm old school with this because I know how you get grants, I know how you get the money and I know how you get recognized for the work. I'm not trying to get recognized, only because – I'm recognized only because of what I do, but that's not my overall intention.

JV: Right.

TH: My intention is for Hip Hop to get recognized as the tool, as a practical application as a part of a series of change that can for for education reform. You see what I'm saying, so –

JV: Yes ma'am.

TH: When I go to – and that's the reason why I got my PhD, honest because when I sit at the table and I talk about it, I intellectualize it then I bring all the other research that everybody already knows to the table. It takes Hip Hop and what you and I and others are trying to another level.

JV: To another level.

TH: If we just do it in our classrooms, and maybe because we don't know how to take it to another level or even when you create your curriculum, right, the point is once you create the curriculum okay, you can use it at Roots, you could use it somewhere else, wherever you want to use it but unless this curriculum has a scientific evaluation of evidence right, you're not going to max out on the impact.

JV: Right. Right.

TH: It's, you know. Okay, and I'm just being real honest with us, with you because you have to know how to take what you – it could be the baddest curriculum that anybody ever seen, right?

JV: Right.

TH: But it's there's a grant over here that they can't use it, if they get a grant from the stare or the government or from a foundation because the KC foundation and other foundations really helped me with my research, or any foundation if you're going to get some serious money to get some they want to know 'what's the science behind it.

JV: Right, right.

TH: I'm just throwing that out there and –

JV: Yeah. Thank you for mentioning that, yeah.

TH: Yeah, so you know and –

JV: Well, with your permission, I would definitely like to keep you posted on my progress and –

TH: I'd love that, please do.

JV: Okay.

TH: Please keep me posted. So do you know Thandika, do you know my daughter personally?

JV: Not personally, like I said, we're both in brother and sister organizations so we've interacted –

TH: Like on Facebook?

JV: No, we met in real life and we've talked to each other a couple of times but I can't say that we're like close friends or anything but we're associates. We know who each other are and if I see her down the street I'll know here and acknowledge her and she'll acknowledge me, so we have that association through the organizations.

TH: Great.

JV: Beyond that I can't honestly say I know. We have that respect level and I definitely have to personally thank her for you know having me get in contact with – because she explained what she'd kind of into with the metaphysics, and I was telling her how metaphysics especially people like Black Dot and KRS-1 are really incorporating metaphysics into Hip Hop, so I've been kind of interested in that too, not only in relation to Hip Hop but just in my own personal life. We've kind of had that connection just having that conversation and her interest and my interest, so I look to having the conversation with her a little bit more just to tell her how this went. Like I said, every time we see each other like we have these national conclaves at different cities and states throughout the U.S. so I'm always seeing her and we always say hi.

TH: She's a good girl; she'll even keep my chakras and keep my alignment together. She's a good girl and that's what she –

JV: She is.

TH: – You ever heard of Red Alert?

JV: Yeah, I have. DJ Red Alert?

TH: She actually opened for Red Alert and opened for MC Lyte, she was actually the talent when were back in the day because she was like four, seven you know. We had a Hip Hop show on TV, we just took her – all my research she was like the one who had to show and tell at some level so we could pitch it.

JV: Wow. See, I didn't know that.

TH: Yeah.

JV: I'ma have to tease her about that.

TH: Yeah, tease her about it. Deekey Do [sp?]. That was her stage name.

JV: What was it?

TH: Deekey Do [sp?]. She's a part of my research, my dissertation study. I put her in there with Chris and Chuck and all of them. I put her right there as one of the young artist.

JV: Oh, okay. Wow. I'm going to have to ask her about that. That's interesting.

TH: Well, It's nice to meet you over the phone and I'm glad you made contact. Hopefully I was helpful and you know, if you need to you know come back and ask me anything or anything else I might be able to help to make you successful at what you're doing feel free and I have to send you back this consent form, right?

JV: Yes ma'am.

TH: Did you – I guess I have your email, so I'll just make a copy of it and sign it and get it back to you.

JV: Okay, that'll be great.

TH: Okay. This has been good, but defiantly keep me abreast of what you're doing, okay?

JV: Yes ma'am I definitely will. Thank you again.

TH: Okay, God bless you.

JV: Okay. Thank you, you too. Peace.

TH: Bye.

Appendix E – Interview Transcription (Dr. Bettina Love)

JV: I do appreciate you taking out the time to do this interview. I'm not sure if you were able to get a chance to read a description of what my thesis is, but it's based on Hip Hop integration, which is a teaching strategy that I'm trying to develop, which uses Hip Hop and more specifically the elements within Hip Hop as a pedagogical tool for culturally responsive teaching.

One of the main focuses is to allow the student to retain the information and to get them engaged into the learning process.

BL: Okay.

JV: So, I use three teaching methods, which are: arts integration, cooperative learning, as well as the theory of multiple intelligences. So the—

BL: Okay.

JV: -- collaboration of all these strategies is something I've been teaching. I've been teaching for six years now, I work at, it's an African-centered charter school called Roots Activity Learning Center, which is in Washington DC and the curriculum is African-centered interdisciplinary, multi-level hands-on science curriculum, so everything is based on a specific scientific theme—

BL: Okay.

JV: And within that theme I use all the disciplines in the core subjects to pretty much address the specific themes. I found, you know, through my own interest in Hip Hop and I've seen how it's benefitted me just in terms of my consciousness and my awareness of myself, my environment, the world around me, I thought it would be beneficial to

incorporate it into the classroom. It's something I've been doing since I first started teaching—

BL: Okay.

JV: I've established various lesson plans and activities, you know, to kind of you know, cater to their needs, their individual needs as well as collective needs. It's something that's continuing to be developed but eventually I want to get to a point where I'm establishing and creating these educational kits that are incorporated into this particular curriculum. So that's the process that I'm going through now and I just think that this research and studies is going to pretty much justify and solidifies this teaching strategy. I think I initially saw you on Facebook and I found out about your afterschool program. I saw some of the video footage and I really liked the things that you were doing with the children and the commentary you were having with the cyphers and the people you were bringing in through the community, I think that's dynamic to not only have something that's in the classroom but also as an afterschool program so that really inspired me to kind of look into that endeavor and think of in terms of beyond what's going on the classroom—

BL: Right.

JV: More so our community based you know, um effort, that's of what kind of sparked my interest in having you as an interview, or a participant in an interview.

BL: I'm glad you checked it out and thought it was dope.

JV: Yeah. So, before I get into some of the questions I think of the first questions I want to ask is who's on your playlist right now? Who are you listening to in terms of Hip Hop--

BL: Aww man, --

JV: or any genre for that matter but more specifically Hip Hop.

BL: I'm a big--- uh, I've been bumping, right now Earth, Wind & Fire nonstop. I've been bumping just albums like Dwele, Bilal and they all did Earth, Wind & Fire cuts.

JV: Really?

BL: Big fan right now of Kendrick Lamar. I like Wale, I'm a big fan of Wale. Who else am I bumping? Always bumping Kanye West. Always bumping Jay-Z. Always bumping Nas.

JV: Right, right.

BL: I'm a big fan of The Brand New Heavies, I love Q-Tip. I guess it's really--- And I love Southern Hip Hop as well—

JV: Now you—

BL: Big Kirk---

JV: Yeah

BL: Folks like that.

JV: Now, are you from Atlanta or is that where you reside right now?

BL: That's where I am right now. I'm originally from Upstate New York, Rochester.

JV: Okay, got you. Okay. Definitely Earth, Wind & Fire. You know, their music is just so universal.

BL. Yeah.

JV: It makes you feel good but at the same time they brought a conscious awareness, certain tools that we can use in life, whether it's relationships or knowledge of self. Earth

Wind & Fire, I think will be one of those timeless groups. It's going to be one hundred years from now and we're still going to be bumping Earth, Wind & Fire.

BL: I hope so.

JV: And they kind of fit into this genre that I learned about, Afrofuturism bringing science fiction and metaphysics into the Black experience. The covers that they had were definitely based on ancient Egypt or ancient Kemet and some of the imagery that they had in the music all tied in to this perfect, I don't want to say product, but this image and culture they were bringing to the forefront. Definitely Earth, Wind & Fire. I'm bumping Kendrick Lamar. What I've tried to emphasize with people with Kendrick Lamar is you have to listen to some of his earlier works too because—

BL: Yeah. I'm sorry, I like his first album better than the one he has out now.

JV: Right, right. Me too. Yeah.

BL. You know.

JV: But he's still keeping true. The one thing I like about him is you can't really put him in a box. He's an artist; he doesn't really want to be fit into a box, so he's always trying different styles and different sounds. That's something that I do appreciate with him and it just so happens that a lot of people are recognizing him now but I think he's going to stay true to what he stands for and what he's trying to bring to the table, hopefully.

BL: People look at Hip Hop really broadly. There's dope MC's out there that are really pushing the envelope. You've got like Lupe Fiasco--

JV: Yes.

BL: Kendrick Lamar, these guys are really pushing the envelope.

JV: Yeah

BL: And I love that they're blurring the line between conscious rap and commercial rap. I think those binaries have to go.

JV: They're here at a perfect time right now because they're definitely acknowledging their predecessors but there's a collection of all of that. Just with access to internet, there's so many people out there that are making good music, no matter what they're talking just the art itself

BL: Yeah

JV: And the culture itself is something that's being prominent and I think a lot of people are representing that well in their own different way.

BL: Yeah.

JV: How would you define Hip Hop culture? I know that's kind of hard because it's a complex system and it's always constantly changing, but if you were to define Hip Hop and how you view it, because some people look at it as something that is spiritual, some people look at it as an artistic movement, some people look at it as a culture. Some people look at the commercialization of Hip Hop. How do you define Hip Hop and what does it mean to you?

BL: At least for me, Hip Hop is cultural roles of self-expression, and these cultural roles of self-expression particularly come out of the Black experience.

JV: Right.

BL: It comes out of oppression. It comes out of being disenfranchised and how we choose to speak up and speak back to those injustices through cultural roles of expression. It could be rapping, it could be deejaying, it could be dance, it could be graffiti, it could be new fashion.

JV: Right

BL: We're always speaking back and speaking up through these cultural roles of expression. I think that Hip Hop is our vehicle to do that. The Civil Rights Movement, they had their vehicle to do that. Also, when you start to think about Hip Hop and the fifth element of Hip Hop, which is 'knowledge of self and consciousness', you can tie it back to the griots. You can tie African dance back to Brazilian Martial Arts. It is a part of our culture; because it has rituals, it has traditions, a way of speaking; it has social networks and social organization, so it is so complex. Then there's also, for me, a spirituality side of it. When I'm at a Hip Hop concert, I'm at church.

JV: (laughs) Right.

BL: It's the same call and response; it's the same feeling the same emotion. It's so much bigger than a type of genre of music.

JV: Right.

BL: I love when Erykah Badu said, "Hip Hop, it's bigger than religion". I mean, she understands it.

JV: Um hmm

BL: She really gets that this is much more than just music. It's a feeling that you get. I love being in the south when you hear Cee-Lo over a track. Whoo! It's a whole different feeling.

JV: A lot of people forget that he raps too. You know

BL: Right! Right!

JV: He's been singing, and he won the praise like Drake and them for singing and rapping but he was doing that too since the beginning.

BL: Now that's why I love southern Hip Hop.

JV: Right.

BL: It's so soulful. For me, I'm a big T.I. fan just because that brother in ever bar he spits he feels it, then he makes you feel it. So I'm battling emotions, talk about multiple intelligences. Hip Hop calls you, it draws you in.

JV: Right.

BL: Spiritually, physically, mentally, artistically. It's those things that – people ask me all the time, like do you rap? No. Do you DJ? No. Can you B-boy, B-girl? No, but I am Hip Hop.

JV: Right

BL: I'm convinced that this is my culture.

JV: Right.

BL: For me Hip Hop is all of that.

JV: I lived down south as well, actually; I lived on the west coast, I was a military brat growing up. I lived in the west coast; I lived in San Francisco when they were first exposed to Hip Hop through Beat Street. I lived in the South. I went to school in Louisiana. My family is from Louisiana. I lived in Texas, so I was exposed to The Ghetto Boys and that whole culture down there. I lived in the Mid-west, in Illinois for a little while and now I live in D.C., and that's why I appreciate the different perspectives like you were saying. Everybody brought something to the table; they had their own different sound that derived from the culture of what was going on in their respective cities.

BL: That's why it doesn't fade—

JV: It'll never—

BL: That's why it doesn't fade.

JV: Right.

BL: It's constantly mutating, because it's about what's going on in the streets.

JV: Right. Exactly.

BL: Often times, with the commercialism of it, we don't see it. People that step in and out of Hip Hop off the radio; you don't see and understand that this is street culture at its finest. All Hip Hop artist and Black folks in general are organic intellectuals. That's what Hip Hop is at its finest, we are organic intellectuals. We take what we see on the streets and turn it into something. That's what I love about Hip Hop.

JV: So what was the first time you started using Hip Hop—did you actually teach a classroom or did you get started into the afterschool program or were you at first an educator in the institution or classroom?

BL: I was at first an educator, so I finished my Master's at University of Pittsburgh, I started teaching in Pittsburgh. Then I took a job in Miami, Florida.

JV: Okay.

BL: When I was in Miami, it was my second year of teaching and it became apparent to me that I have so much in common with my students. The one thing that I had in common with them was Hip Hop, so why was I constantly trying not to bring in our bond? I realized, once I started bringing Hip Hop into the classroom and opening myself to my students it was a big shift.

JV: Right.

BL: It was almost overnight that these kids started to trust me more; they listened with a critical ear now and from that experience I went to get my PhD to research how I could

implement Hip Hop culture relevant pedagogy into the classroom in meaningful ways. Not just using or rap songs to memorize your mathematical facts or times tables, which is cool, I'm not putting that down, that's what's up, but I tell people all the time if we're only embracing one element of Hip Hop then we're marginalizing the culture.

JV: Exactly.

BL: If we're going to say it's a real culture then you embrace all of it.

JV: Exactly. And that's what I notice about some educators that create their own songs to explain algebraic expression, which is really good but one of my main focuses is to look at the whole culture- every aspect of it. When you were in Miami, what year was that?

BL: Jeffrey, gosh… I left 2003 or 4

JV: Okay.

BL: Yeah, right around there. I started my PhD program in 2005.

JV: How were you using it in the classroom, what were some of the things that you were doing?

BL: At that point, I was using rap songs and talking to the kids about fashion; that was our niche. I love Jordan's, especially at that time in my life. I was like twenty-three years old. I had my first teaching job, no family, no nothing so I'd buy Jordan's. I loved sneakers, so that was my entry to my students at that point. Especially teaching in Miami, Florida, where a large Hispanic population, so a lot of my student were Haitian so there were a lot of cultural barriers even though I was African American they didn't look like me. We didn't grow up the same. So, for me it was saying what do we have in common? Fashion was something we had in common. And so having conversations with students

around Jordan's, okay, now let's talk about how much they cost. How much they cost to make. How much do they cost to sell them? So it was having those conversations that from the elements of hi p hop, talking about fashion to transport to something else, a more broader conversation still talking about fashion. What else did we do? Conversations about how to treat women. Right?

JV: Right.

BL: What a real pimp – What a real pimp is. I talked about if you're a real pimp—they all would sit around – this was around 50 Cent "Don't know what you heard about me, I'm a P.I.M.P."

JV: Um hmm

BL: My kids loved that song. And so I had these critical conversations if you guys are pimps, let's just say you are if that's what you want to be, why don't you pimp school? Why don't you pimp school? Take everything that this place have to give you and and and use it.

JV: Right.

BL: And so, in my class, once we realized that we could pimp education, they were like, they were gone with that. They were good. They were coming in my classroom sitting down and you know, ready to learn. For me at that point, I was still kind of playing with all this.

JV: Right, right.

BL: It wasn't until I got into my doctoral program that I was able to refine it more.

JV: Right.

BL: And then when I got out and took my first job I started to read up more and my current research really trying to use the fine elements of Hip Hop to cling to the formal curriculum.

JV: Okay. When you finished your doctorate was this when you started to write your 'Hip hip little sisters speak book or –

BL: Yup. That book is my dissertation.

JV: Oh, okay. Can you tell me a little more about that, because I was kind of intrigued by that?

BL: Yeah, well the book is really in multiple views, so it's about six African American girls and how they understand Hip Hop, but it's really how they understand the location of Hip Hop. So it's really focused on Atlanta, Georgia. And so, the backdrop of Atlanta, Georgia as a place with a huge sex industry

JV: Right

BL: With great numbers right now in Atlanta of gentrification taking place

JV: Right

BL: The race relations of this city, so how does a young girl in Atlanta growing up understand who she is, her sexuality, her body, all of that through her location and then Hip Hop perpetuating what's going on in her location?

JV: Um hmm

BL: So as she's driving by or on the bus and you, I mean, if you're in Atlanta Georgia, you see nothing but billboards of Black women in bathing suits, you're living in a city where you're seeing homes that used to have older Black folks in it being shut down, torn up and now they're putting three homes on that same block. You're living in a city where

the race relations are not good and then you listen to Hip Hop. So how do you understand who you are through all of that? Now, the reason why I did that was because too often we just blame Hip Hop.

JV: Right

BL: Hip Hop is speaking back to and about and perpetuating what's going on in other cities and so not only to look at Hip Hop music; folks look at a city as well.

JV: Right.

BL: and how that influences these young girls. It's not just Hip Hop. Hip Hop is a part of what influences them but Hip Hop is also a microcosm of the world.

JV: Right, exactly

BL: And a microcosm of Atlanta Georgia.

JV: Right

BL: And so it's a fuller picture to look at the politics, look at the race relations, look at the economics. All of these things are influencing Hip Hop, which ultimately influences these young girls.

JV: Beautiful. Yeah, I'm definitely going to have to pick up that book and it is accessible? You can go to Amazon or—

BL: Yeah, you can go to Amazon, it's at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, yeah. I'm really trying dissect Atlanta from Brown on so that's where the book kind of starts, with the city of Atlanta saying 'We're not – even though Brown came with the decision of desegregating schools, we're not' and then from that white flight and then how the city became a chocolate city because of the Brown decision.

JV: Right

BL: And now you have Whites taking over the city again.

JV: Right

BL: Atlanta is the— Atlanta and D.C. are the fastest growing…..

JV: I was about to say the same things happen up here, same things.

BL: Yeah, D.C. so, in Atlanta, Atlanta has had a string of African American mayors since 1973 and this election or the next that will change. How this city is changing also speaks to how Hip Hop will change ultimately in this city.

JV: Right, right, yeah. I don't know if you're familiar with this artist named Macklemore?

BL: Macklemore, no.

JV: Yeah. He has this song that's real dynamic. I'll share it with you on your Facebook page and I want you to let me know—

BL: Please do.

JV: —What you think about it. Let me see, the name of the song is called 'Same Love'.

BL: Okay

JV: He delves into these misconceptions and conceptions of homosexuality.

BL: Oh wow.

JV: Yeah it's real deep song. Probably five years ago, nobody would rap about that kind of stuff but just the fact you have Hip Hop artist who are—even like Kanye West, people who admit that they've been homophobic so this is defiantly a platform and a vehicle just to raise consciousness and awareness of various aspects of how people are living and concerns and issues that pervade society. I definitely want to send that to you.

BL: Please do. That's a great thing because Hip Hop is not [INAUDIBLE 21:24] as it's become, homosexuality and homophobia becomes more on the topic of Americans this is why it's in their thoughts. When you hear Obama talking about and Jay-Z won't, this is what happens. Too often folks think that you can—we're just coming with this stuff out of left field.

JV: Right.

BL: No. I tell my teachers all the time, if you're upset about the misogyny that's taking place in Hip Hop music you've better be upset about the misogyny that's taking place in Fortune 500 companies as well.

JV: Right, right.

BL: You just can't keep blaming kids. Kids are learning it from somewhere.

JV: Yeah.

BL: You have corporations that spend millions of dollars each year trying to teach their executives how to be appropriate in corporate America when you have women there. You know what I mean?

JV: Yeah.

BL: For me, the book was really about giving a fuller picture. It's not the whole picture, but it's a fuller picture.

JV: Right.

BL: —to understanding. There's a chapter in the book when I talk about me being a career person and how Hip Hop researchers—I think, my opinion, we have to be very open about who we are because we all see Hip Hop differently.

JV: Right.

BL: It's not monolithic. You've grown up everywhere. You've seen how different Hip Hop is. When I talk to Hip Hop researchers around the country, especially from New York—I'm from New York, born and raised all eighteen years in Upstate New York. They will trash the South. It's like, but you're a Hip Hop researcher; you have to walk into this a little bit differently. Our regional locale and regional pride sometimes plays into our understanding of Hip Hop music. I talk a lot about me knocking down my stereotypes of what I considered 'country' and my growing up and my thoughts about country folk.

JV: Right.

BL: And how that played out when I went to Miami and I went to Atlanta I'm like deep in the country this is some bullcrap, what the hell they talking about? I'm sitting here like "what? You gotta go to the sto'? What are you talking"—so I had to grapple with that. Why was it that I loved to hear Andre 3000 say but not my kids?

JV: Right, right. Yeah.

BL: I think that's important for the field of Hip Hop studies is for us to start acknowledging these regional differences that we have and how that affects our work.

JV: I agree. Can you describe a little bit about your afterschool program, 'The Real Talk'? What is it? Hip Hop education for social justice?

BL: Yeah.

JV: Because I know you're working with a specific school, I don't know if there's more but can you describe not only the program, but the school and demographic of the classroom, like the grade level, ethnicity and—

BL: No problem. Sure. The school is called Kindezi, and we're a charter school and I say 'we' because I'm actually on the school board.

JV: Oh, okay.

BL: I'm one of the founding school board members, then I moved to Cincinnati took a job there; came back then they put me back on the school board. The school right now, we go from K to 5th. We add a grade every year; we'll be doing that until Middle School in Georgia is eighth grade. Then we will open a High School. We are student-centered. We only have six students per classroom.

JV: Wow

BL: We're very much about community learning and family-centered learning. The teachers teach each student on their individualized instruction. Each student— it doesn't matter what grade you have. We also loop, so teachers stay with those same students. The teachers should be creating individualized lessons for each and every student, so let's say you're in third grade but you teach, I mean you read on a fifth eighth grade level, well that is what you will get.

JV: Right.

BL: Everything is individualized. We're always trying to reach 'Flow' with students, and flow meaning that we're at a point where you're being challenged but it's not too hard. The light bulb is always going off. We're also about leadership and [INAUDIBLE 22:48] so that's where I came in with the afterschool program. We're about 98% African American. For the program, what I did, I took the fifth grade class, which is our highest class there—I took that class, I took four fifth grade classes and what I did was I put the whole fifth grade together for the program. We had about twenty-two students in fifth

grade, seventeen signed up for the afterschool program. Of the seventeen, sixteen were Black and we had one White girl. We ran for twenty-six weeks. We just ended last week. Throughout, what we wanted to do was take student's formal curriculum and link that to the five elements of Hip Hop.

JV: Right.

BL: With the fifth element running throughout the course, always going back to knowledge of self and always going back to the community. The school was located in West End of Atlanta, Georgia; which is the oldest zone of Atlanta and also has the highest crime and homicide rate in Atlanta, Georgia. We ran for twenty-six weeks was the program. What else? Ran for twenty-six weeks, we also were trying to make sure we were acknowledging when we could the common core standards, to link it to the common core. I say that because I'm not a big fan of the common core.

JV: Yeah.

BL: But I do thing that especially in Georgia, it gets us way more latitude than we've ever had. In Georgia, performance standards were absolutely horrible. Just very— When I say horrible I mean just very political and ideological. This is what a kid should know about The Civil War, okay. Nothing there that had any substance or says anything about Black people's role or anybody else's role, you know, creating heroes and creating saints throughout the curriculum.

JV: Right.

BL: For me, the common core does open up a few more things; but I don't think it's the say all be all, but I do think it allows, especially folks in the South to do a little more with

the curriculum. Really trying to use the common core, we did everything from linking break dancing to physics—

JV: Yeah, I saw.

BL: —use graffiti to relate word problems to math. We linked it back to the griots and talked about the griots and our storytellers, move on to freedom songs; 'The Gospel Train is Coming' and 'Wade in the Water'.

JV: Right.

BL: Talking about verbal arts and how ingenious our African slaves are, and the reason behind that is because I just got tired of every time you open up a textbook, you see—if you're African American the first time you see yourself as a slave—

JV: Right.

BL: And I can't change the textbook, but I can change the discourse.

JV: Right.

BL: So, having these students understand that African Americans, even though they were enslaved—they weren't slaves, they were enslaved, that they were genius.

JV: Right.

BL: They took the language and the religion that was given to them and flipped it on them jokers. Always going back to knowledge of self, always linking the brilliance of African Americans to the curriculum. Even having the little White girl there, we really focused on this as the culture of urban students.

JV: Right.

BL: If you are urban, this is your culture. I don't care yellow, Black, this is a part of your culture. Hip Hop and the roots of Hip Hop are part of your culture.

JV: Right.

BL: We didn't shy away from that even though we didn't have a class full of Black folks. It was the same—and the little girl's name is Sandy— Sandy, this is your culture too. You're in a school full of Black folks, this is your culture.

JV: Right.

BL: You live in an urban area, this is your culture. So, you need to understand when you see these guys riding around with the Hip Hop playing or when you see these individuals, not to be scared. This is culture. We really try to couch it under urban culture. I think it's great that we had a White student in that class because it kept them honest.

JV: Right.

BL: It let us be honest and say this is our story, this is the story of your classmates. This is the story of you too because this is your culture. You're in this school with us, now you're one of us. It was really great to have that dynamic play out. We linked the five elements, but the biggest thing, the topic that I'm most proud of—It's called 'Real Talk Hip Hop education program for social justice and I think social justice, that piece was a critical part for me so we always took the last twenty minutes, fifteen minutes of the class if the lesson did not have a social justice part and talked about the issues in the community.

JV: Right.

BL: we talked about global warming, kids wanted to talk about stray dogs and stray cats, talked about the high dropout rate in Georgia, I think in 2010 nearly 30,000 drop outs in the state.

JV: Hmmm

BL: We used word of excellence to talk about Black on Black crime and shootings. From that the kids had to create a final project with Hip Hop to speak to their community.

JV: Nice

BL: The kids chose to talk about Trayvon Martin. So, the kids chose to create a short movie, a rap song and a mural that reflected stereotypes and assumptions and so we talked about how stereotypes and assumptions led to the death of Trayvon Martin. This final project was just dope. They storyboarded and for me, also bringing in multiple literacy. So they storyboarded the movie, wrote the rap, created the mural; it was all student-centered, student run but having that social justice piece like how can we as fifth graders, how can you guys as fifth graders tell your community about what's going on and then be inform them about what's going on and speaking back to it. The kids' rap is just amazing.

JV: Is that actually accessible on the website or—

BL: Yeah, if you go to, if you go to the Facebook page it says 'final project'.

JV: Okay.

BL: And it's their movie.

JV: Okay.

BL: It straight up follows the storyboard they came up with, and then they have the mural, which we put on the wall. Stereotype monster who eats your brain up, so there's messages of like racism and hate in this monster and then there's a wall of hope and love that kills the stereotype monster. At the bottom of the art piece is a body and the kids came up with that. The body could be anybody, it's not about a Black person, not about White persons because we all stereotype.

JV: Right.

BL: That is what they came up with and then the movie was really dope. Throughout the movie you see a— we have this zoom shot where you see a young guy with a hoodie on called 'The ghost of Trayvon', so Trayvon is watching everything that happened to him. This is, I mean, this is what the kids came up with.

JV: Yeah man.

BL: They did the research; they had to do the research of the project to find out the facts of the case they created the movie, they created the rap song and the mural. They said they wanted to do Trayvon Martin, how can we focus on Trayvon Martin but still talk about how we can inform our community in a larger sense that's where the notion of stereotypes and assumptions came in.

JV: Okay

BL: Then we also had critical conversations about how we stereotype. The kids were like "I stereotype, I don't kill anybody like George Zimmerman but we all stereotype." The kids having these really complex conversations about how they stereotype a lot of it was Black men, so a classroom full of Black kids talking about how they stereotype Black folks. One girl had this conversation about this guy was walking up to her, he had his pants sagging she thought he was scary; he came up to her and was like "your shoe is untied." and that was it but she thought all these things because of stereotypes, so that's probably what I'm most proud of. What's going to happen next year with 'Real Talk' is that we're going to go into a Hispanic community and we're going to take a full semester and just learn the culture and then after we learn the culture we're going to create

curriculum with the teachers around it. We're also going to be moving into Georgia prisons and facilitating some work there between Hip Hop and the arts of African culture.

JV: That's beautiful. Well, I appreciate all—

BL: So we're really trying—

JV: I'm sorry?

BL: Say it again?

JV: No, I'm just saying I appreciate all the work that you're doing, it's phenomenal.

BL: Thank you, thank you. I'm really proud of them. It went so well, it was just a pilot program. I wanted to see how well we could link the elements to the standard curriculum and I wanted to see how we could push these social justice issues because it really pisses me off because every school in the country, from elementa—from K12 to colleges they have this tagline of social justice in their mantra, in their mission statements but nobody does anything about it.

JV: Right.

BL: It's just a buzzword and it's really lost, its credibility is [INAUDIBLE 35:46] because it's such a buzzword now. We're not even including kids in this conversation so that was probably the most powerful aspect of, probably the part I'm most proud about. It is—we link the elements to the formal curriculum and these kids, they learned a lot. The next thing we're probably going to put on the web is their response, the kids' responses to knowledge of self.

JV: Okay.

BL: The last piece is that the kids went to Spellman and presented their movie and what they learned in the class to a class at Spellman, that was our culminating activity and that happened to be on the one-year mark of Trayvon's death. We did that February 26th.

JV: And that kind of leads me to my next question, have you been willing to share some of your lessons to other teachers of how to use Hip Hop, so say for instance, it another person was interested in using Hip Hop as a pedagogy or after school program for whether it's social justice or just integrating it within the classroom have you ever found yourself sharing some of your ideas or are you willing to do that?

BL: Oh, if you go to Bettinalove.com we post every lesson. We post every lesson and we post, I mean, we post the videos of every lesson but it's a scripted lesson plan. I detail step by step what I did, so I think the first seven or eight lessons are up. We probably have another eight to add. I've been writing crazy articles right now, so hopefully the summer we'll try and update the last eight sessions, but yeah everything.

JV: That's good.

BL: That's who I am. Hip Hop, Facebook page, then we have the website, I try to add as much as possible so all the videos we use when I took in Beat street, the elements, parents, work videos, all that stuff is up. So teachers can jus— all the elements are up, they can just go to the website and just start reading everything that we did and say boom, this is what we're going to do in my classroom, get a video, everything you need. There's a standard; all that stuff.

JV: Sounds like you may need an assistant, to help you with that.

BL: say it again?

JV: Sounds like all the stuff that you're doing, you need an assistant.

BL: Oh man! You don't—that is crazy that you said that— right now, the school that I Kindezi, I had a parent call me Friday, she was like "Yo, Dr. Love, I heard that you're not doing the program next year." I said, "well, I don't—it's only one of me. I already—I have a school in Athens I'm doing the program, maybe I can pick it up the year after." She was like "No, me and a few other parents have said that maybe you need to start training people."

JV: Right.

BL: The parent called me; I was like 'okay', um, yeah. That's the one thing about being an academic; we're not necessarily business-minded. I'm really trying to think about what is the next step because there's only one of me but I – there's definitely been a huge response to what I'm doing and I'm just really proud of that. I do have to find a way to I don't want to say market it, because I'm not trying to market it—

JV: Right, right, right.

BL: One thing I do try—I want to get people to understand that it's a pedagogy. It's not a model. You've got to understand the culture of the students so—

JV: Exactly.

BL: This may not work—We go to Detroit with this, I've got to do a whole different thing.

JV: Right.

BL: We may be talking about something totally different, so that's the one thing that I'm apprehensive about is that it doesn't become something that can be pre-packaged. I don't want to do that.

JV: And it has to—

BL: I want it to be organic.

JV: Exactly. It has to be authentic. You know?

BL: Yeah.

JV: I think that's the most important thing like even if you're training other people it's like okay we can train you all you want but if you're not engulfed in the culture itself and being willing to do your own research and getting out there to be exposed to it then it's just going to be a fabricated version of it and the students are going to read right through that.

BL: Right

JV: So it has to be authentic, you know.

BL: And that, and that—actually, I have a meeting with some folks from Georgia Tech and Spellman Monday, the 25th. There's a young girl finishing up her PhD at Georgia Tech and she's that whole like Afro-futuristic vibe and she's creating avatars for kids—

JV: Oh, okay.

BL: We've got that, I've got another guy whose producing beats to go along with this art project that Georgia Tech has going on, so really trying to collaborate with some folks in Atlanta that are doing similar work and thinking about how we can, you know, how we can help each other facilitate what we're doing.

JV: Exactly.

BL: That's kind of the next step so—

JV: That sounds good.

BL: It's really, it's really going well man. It's really going well, but then you know I'm also an academic so I'm writing stuff. I got to write, y'all want me to keep doing this, I've got to write. I've got to get paid.

JV: Right

BL: I've got to take time off, I've got to write this stuff so in the last month I've submitted two pieces and I'm probably going to submit a piece to urban ed today. I just finished up my references about Hip Hop Education for Social Justice.

JV: Okay.

BL: So, that's the next move, just keep writing, keep writing, keep writing. Just to make sure I find time to write about it because I'm telling folks like "Yo, I've got to think." That's also the game you've got to play. If you want to be an academic, how much community work being out in the community so that's that. That's the push and pull of it—

JV: Right.

BL: being a researcher.

JV: Well, I appreciate it. Like I said, I appreciate everything that you're doing and it just—

BL: Man, I appreciate you. We in this together, brother.

JV: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. We definitely have to connect, even if we're just keeping each other posted on what we're doing and like I said—

BL: Did you see the call'? Call from Words, beats, rhymes? What is that?

JV: Words, beats and Life?

BL: Yeah, did you see the call?

JV: No

BL: Okay, I'll send you the call. They have a call for—due March 30th and it's only 150 abstract and it's about the fifth element of Hip Hop. It's only 150 word abstract and if your abstract is selected they're going to have a teach-in in July, July 12-14th in D.C.

JV: Okay. Yeah, I think I might have saw something, yeah. Because I've been trying to get in contact with Mazi Mutafa who started that out here, the Words, Beats and Life. I've been—

BL: Yeah.

JV: — a fan of what they've been doing for quite a few years I had a couple of my students get involved with their Bum Rush the Boards, it's like a chess tournament. They're doing a lot of great stuff out here.

BL: Yeah. I'll send you that call later on today because I want to submit and hopefully I'll get accepted and then I'll be in D.C. July 12-14th.

JV: Alright, definitely keep me posted on that, because I would defiantly like to meet you physically and build some more.

BL: No problem at all, and where are you doing your doc work?

JV: Well, I'm actually in a Master's program. Corcoran College of Art and Design. So I'm—

BL: Oh that's what's up, man.

JV: I'm getting my Master of Arts in teaching. Haven't really considered doing a doctorate yet, but I've been hearing—I don't know if you're familiar with Dr. Thandi Hicks-Harper?

BL: No.

JV: She's considered the first educator to use rap as a pedagogy back in 1983. I just so happen to know her daughter, she's another person who I interviewed. She was just breaking down all this history behind what she was doing in the early eighties before it was even on MTV and she was interviewing Afrika Bambaataa and Heavy D and salt N' Pepa and so on and so forth.

BL: Wow.

JV: So you definitely want to check her out.

BL: Can you send me her name?

JV: Yeah, definitely, I definitely will.

BL: Please do, yeah.

JV: so, she was like, "in order for you to really solidify what you're doing, you've got to get your doctorate; you've got to get your PhD." I never really thought about it until she said it and you're kind of re-emphasizing that. Maybe that'll be my next goal. I'm a family man as well, so it's been a struggle just trying to do this Master's program but maybe in the near future I can look into that as a future goal. I'm just getting my Master's right now, this is my last semester, so hopefully everything will work out when I finish this thesis up and I have something documented and this is pretty much just the beginning. I have some other ideas that I want to implement, so just getting insight from other educators and other people who are doing the same thing that I'm doing and even as an expansion and continuation and just giving me some ideas of what I can incorporate as well. I'm truly blessed and I want to continue to move forward with that.

BL: That's what's up man. Keep going, good luck and if you think about that PhD let me know. UGA, we would love you.

JV: Alright. I appreciate that.

BL: And I will fight my damndest to get you some money.

JV: I appreciate that. I'ma hold you to that.

BL: Keep us in mind. I will say this, in all honesty; UGA is a rough place for Black folk, living in Athens. I don't live in—I drive an hour. I'm close to Atlanta, so I always caution folks, like it is still the South and this is not Atlanta.

JV: Right, right.

BL: We're in Athens, Georgia; which is tuff. We do have a great program. We have some money here. We have one of the top scholars on classism and racism and Black thought in our department.

JV: I'm defiantly going to keep that in mind. One thing about living everywhere, one thing about living all throughout the United States, I'm able to adjust anywhere so that's never been a concern for me.

BL: Oh, I understand but you have a family. I have two kids of my own and I didn't want to live—I didn't want to bring them to Athens, so I wouldn't ask somebody else to bring theirs to Athens. I'm not going to act like my kids are here.

JV: I hear that, right.

BL: You know what I mean?

JV: Well, I appreciate everything—

BL: Yo, I appreciate you man, keep me posted.

JV: I will do and I'll definitely send you that link to that song and also Thandi Hicks-Harper's information so you can look into that—

BL: Okay.

JV: —and we'll keep in communication.

BL: Alright man, appreciate you, good lick with all you do.

JV: You too.

BL: Alright, peace.

JV: Peace.

Appendix F

Lesson Plan

Title: Graffiti Word Maps

Goal/Description: The goal of this activity is to explore graffiti art to familiarize the students with their vocabulary words.

Developmental Rationale: Most students in middle school face many challenges in their artistic development during this stage. Students at this age become more critical of their work and attempt to create art that is perceived as more realistic. Therefore, they will delve into the creative process by sketching their ideas, prior to finalizing their finished work.

Standards: National Visual Arts Standards: **Content Standard #3.** Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas. **Content Standard #4.** Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures. **Content Standard #6.** Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines. DC Visual Arts Standards: **2.** Apply artistic processes and skills in a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art. (Production and Creative Expression) **5.** Connect and apply what is learned in the visual arts to other art forms, subject areas, visual culture and communications and to careers (Connections, Relationships, Applications) Common Core State Standards: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. DC Language Arts Standards: **5.LD-V.9.**

Identify and apply the meanings of the terms antonym, synonym, and homophone. **5.LD-V.10.** Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words in context using definitions and examples stated in the text. **6.LD-V.8**. Use such clues as definition, example, and restatement to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words and words with multiple meanings in context. **7.LD-V.10**. Determine meanings, pronunciations, alternate word choices, correct spellings, parts of speech, or etymologies of words using dictionaries, glossaries, thesauri, and other resources (printed and electronic). **8.LD-V.11.** Determine meanings, pronunciations, syllabication, synonyms, antonyms, correct spellings, parts of speech, or etymologies of words using dictionaries, glossaries, thesauri, CD-ROMs, and the Internet.

Big Ideas: Graffiti writers use words, symbols, and illustrations for their compositions.

Objective/Outcomes: Students will learn the basic components of graffiti art and then create word maps for their vocabulary words, which will include: words, definitions, sentences, antonyms, synonyms, and illustrations.

Enduring Understandings: Graffiti art encompasses a variety of artistic elements that could assist students in retaining information by providing a visual representation of their vocabulary words. My delving into the creative process of producing graffiti word maps, the students will be able to gain a better understanding of the meaning of the words and how to place them in sentences.

Essential Questions: What is graffiti? What are some of the artistic elements that exist within this art form? How could graffiti be used to understand language?

Key Knowledge/Skills: Declarative Knowledge – Graffiti art is a form of written communication that showcases words, symbols, and illustrations that have specific meanings. **Procedural Knowledge** – The students will view several examples of graffiti art and identify artistic elements, such as: line, color, shape, space, form, etc. The students will then create their own graffiti art using their vocabulary words for language arts.

Evaluation/Assessment: Formative - The students will be introduced to artwork based on graffiti and have a discussion based on its artistic elements. Afterwards, the students will receive their vocabulary words, a template for the word maps, and some sample graffiti letters. Based on this information, they will creatively construct their own graffiti word maps. At the end of the week, they will take an assessment based on their words. **Summative** - Group discussion; creating the word maps; written assessment

Materials/Teacher Resources: Promethean ActivBoard, computer, Powerpoint presentation with graffiti images, vocabulary worksheet (20 words), word map template, graffiti letter samples, paper, pencil, markers, colored pencils, crayons

Teaching Procedure/Time Allotted: 1 week

Pre-assessment: Warm-up discussion, "What is graffiti?"

Intro/Motivational Dialogue: Today, we are going to discuss graffiti art and how it could help us remember our vocabulary words for the assessment on Friday. We will take a look at some artwork by several graffiti artists and identify some artistic elements that exist within each piece. In doing so, we will be able to create our artwork in the form of graffiti word maps.

Demonstration: The teacher will discuss the relationship between the graffiti art and language and how artistic elements could convey meanings in words, symbols, and illustrations.

Work Period: After the discussion, the teacher will provide a Powerpoint presentation that shows various images of graffiti art. Within each slide, the students will identify specific artistic elements and determine what the artist is trying to convey through these elements. Next, the students will receive their vocabulary words and pick one word to use for a tutorial. The teacher will demonstrate how to construct several lettering styles, taking into consideration the form, space, value, and lines of each letter within the word. The students will also review the color wheel to determine how color could enhance the composition. Once the students have completed the tutorial, they will be given a template for their word maps and a worksheet with several different lettering styles. Throughout the week, the students will be responsible for finding the definition, antonym, synonym, and a sentence for each word. All 20 words must be turned in by Friday, prior to taking the assessment.

Clean-Up: The students are responsible for cleaning up after each session. Part of their evaluation will be based on their ability to practice teamwork and demonstrate collective responsibility.

Closure: Once the students have completed their graffiti word maps, they will have an assessment.

Plans for Differentiating Instruction: Several students may have difficulty with certain lettering styles; therefore, the teacher may guide these students by allowing them to write in manuscript and then building their letters from that foundation. Furthermore, some students who may work at a slower pace could choose at least 10 of their words to do in a graffiti style and the rest could be written on line paper, as long as it contains all of the components of the word maps. Those who need help with dictionary skills, sentence structure, and spelling will be assisted accordingly.

Appendix G

Lesson Plan

Title: Turntable Time Clocks

Goal/Description: The goal of this activity is to use the art of deejaying to introduce students to the concept of time and how minutes and hours can be determined by using a manipulative in the form of a clock.

Developmental Rationale: Most students in primary grades are approaching the schematic stage, which enables them to add more detail and perspective in their artistic work. This activity provides an opportunity for students to construct a model of clock to enhance their awareness of perception between time and space.

Standards: National Visual Arts Standards: **Content Standard #6.** Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines. DC Visual Arts Standards: **2.** Apply artistic processes and skills in a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art. (Production and Creative Expression) Common Core State Standards: Tell and write time to the nearest minute and measure time intervals in minutes. Solve word problems involving addition and subtraction of time intervals in minutes, e.g., by representing the problem on a number line diagram. DC Mathematics Standards: **3.M.3.** Identify time to the nearest 5 minutes on analog and digital clocks using a.m. and p.m. Compute elapsed time using a clock (e.g., hours and minutes since ...) and using a calendar (e.g., days since ...). **4.M.3.** Identify time to the minute on analog and digital

clocks using a.m. and p.m. Compute elapsed time using a clock (e.g., hours and minutes since ...) and using a calendar (e.g., days since ...).

Big Ideas: The art of deejaying is primarily based on timing; therefore, the concept of time can be explored by constructing clock manipulatives in the form of vinyl records, which were used by DJs during the early stages of Hip Hop culture.

Objective/Outcomes: Students will learn about the art of deejaying in Hip Hop culture and how it relied heavily on timing. Once they are introduced to the art form, they will have a review on the measurement of time and create a manipulative that will assist them in determining the elapsed time.

Enduring Understandings: The art of deejaying is comprised of a variety of techniques that depend on the concept of time. By creating a manipulative that mimics vinyl records used by DJs, the students will be able to explore this art form in an engaging way, while also learning about the measurement of time.

Essential Questions: What is deejaying? How is time related to the art form?

Key Knowledge/Skills: Declarative Knowledge – The art of deejaying connects the concepts of music and math, by understanding the relationship between rhythm and time. **Procedural Knowledge** –The students will create turntable time clocks to explore the art of deejaying, while also learning about the measurement of time to determine the hours,

minutes, and elapsed time.

Evaluation/Assessment: Formative - The students will be introduced to the art of deejaying and engage in an activity that utilizes this concept to explore the measurement of time. Once the manipulatives are complete, they will participate in several lessons that will help determine the hours, minutes and elapsed time. **Summative** - Group discussion; creating the turntable time clocks; lessons based on the measurement of time by using the manipulatives.

Materials/Teacher Resources: two small paper plats, piece of cardboard, two fasteners, construction paper, coloring utensils (crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.), clock worksheet

Teaching Procedure/Time Allotted: 45 minutes

Pre-assessment: Warm-up discussion, "What are some ways in which we can measure time?"

Intro/Motivational Dialogue: Today, we are going to discuss time and how it relates to the art of deejaying. Deejaying played a major role in the development of Hip Hop culture and required extensive knowledge of the relationship between rhythm and time. We will learn more about this relationship by creating our very own turntable time clocks.

Demonstration: The teacher will discuss the relationship between deejaying and time and show how turntables can be viewed as clocks.

Work Period: The teacher will lead a discussion on how time is used in our daily lives and how it can be measured using a variety of methods. After the discussion, the teacher will direct the students' attention to the classroom clock and ask them a series of review questions related to the hour and minutes. They will then be exposed to the art of deejaying and how it has played a pivotal role in the development of Hip Hop culture. Afterwards, they will create their own "turntables" to help tell time. First, the students will attach the paper plates on both ends of the cardboard by putting a hole through the middle of each plate with a fastener, ensuring that their "hands" made out of construction paper is placed between the fastener and plate. Second, the students will label the hours around one plate and the minutes around the other. Lastly, the students will decorate their turntables.

Clean-Up: The students are responsible for cleaning up after each session. Part of their evaluation will be based on their ability to practice teamwork and demonstrate collective responsibility.

Closure: Once the turntables are complete, the teacher will ask a series of questions related to time. The students will verify their basic understanding of time by correctly displaying the hands at the appropriate hours and minutes. To reinforce this lesson, the students will do a clock worksheet to determine the hours, minutes, and elapsed time.

Plans for Differentiating Instruction: Several students may have issues with putting the hours and minutes in the appropriate place; therefore, students can use a ruler to make sure the hours and minutes are aligned. Furthermore, they could use color-coding to distinguish the difference between certain hours and minutes. For example, the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th hours could be a dark color, while the hours in-between them can be a lighter color. The same can apply for the quarter and half minute markers on the clock. Other activities related to time could also be provided to help those students who are struggling with the concept. These may include: bingo games, flashcards, or computer games.

Appendix H

Lesson Plan

Title: Planets in Orbit

Goal/Description: The purpose of this activity is to review the planets in our solar system and provide an opportunity for students to share what they have learned by creating rap songs about a specific planet.

Developmental Rationale: Students in middle school are in the realistic and psuedorealistic stages in their artistic development. Therefore, this activity will help the students enhance their awareness by emphasizing the physical characteristics of the planets and finding creative ways to depict them through poetry, in the form of a rap verse, and illustrations.

Standards: National Visual Arts Standards: **Content Standard #6.** Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines. DC Visual Arts Standards: **2.** Apply artistic processes and skills in a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art. (Production and Creative Expression) **5.** Connect and apply what is learned in the visual arts to other art forms, subject areas, visual culture and communications and to careers (Connections, Relationships, Applications) DC Science Standards: **5.4.1.** Describe that, like all planets and stars, the Earth is approximately spherical in shape. **6.3.1.** Recognize that the solar system consists of the Earth, moon, sun, eight generally recognized other planets that orbit the sun and their satellites, and smaller objects, such as

asteroids and comets.

Big Ideas: Physical characteristics of the planets vary from size, color, and other physical properties. These characteristics can be described using rap verses with elements of poetry.

Objective/Outcomes: Students will learn the physical characteristics of each planet and then do a group activity that involves writing a rap verse about a specific planet, placing it with an illustration on a poster board, and collaborating with the other teams to make a song.

Enduring Understandings: Rapping consists of a variety of poetic styles that could assist students in retaining information. My delving into the creative process of writing their own rap verses, the students will be able to gain a better understanding of the physical characteristic of the planets in the solar system.

Essential Questions: What planet do we live on? What are some of the physical characteristics of our planet? What are some other planets in our solar system? How the planets similar? How are they different?

Key Knowledge/Skills: Declarative Knowledge – The physical characteristics of the planets in our solar system can be conveyed using rap verses to describe their distinctive properties. **Procedural Knowledge** – The students will review the planets in our solar

system and discuss each planets physical characteristics. Afterwards, the students will be placed in teams and create a rap verse based on a specific planet. Next, they will develop an illustration of this planet and then present their verses to the class using the same beat.

Evaluation/Assessment: Formative - The students will participate in a discussion related to the planets of our solar system and then describe on the planet's characteristics using the art of rapping, as well as, an illustration. Their performances will be measured by their abilities to work with a partner to accomplish these tasks. **Summative** - Group discussion; creating a rap verse; creating an illustration of the planet; presentation

Materials/Teacher Resources: Promethean ActivBoard, computer, Powerpoint presentation, paper, poster board, pencil, markers, colored pencils, crayons, Hip Hop instrumental

Teaching Procedure/Time Allotted: 3 days

Pre-assessment: Warm-up discussion, "What planet do we live on?"

Intro/Motivational Dialogue: Today, we are going to review the planets in our solar system by talking about their physical properties and then we will team up to write a rap verse related to these characteristics. Eventually, each team will join in on a song using a Hip Hop instrumental in the background.

Demonstration: The teacher will discuss physical characteristics of each planet and

recite an example of a rap verse from previous projects.

Work Period: *Day 1:* After the discussion, the teacher will provide a Powerpoint presentation that describes the physical characteristics of each planet. The class will then be divided in teams of 2, using cooperative learning technique that would assist in forming groups. This would be done by having each student pick a card from a basket that has the name of a planet. Once the teams are formed, they will get together, review their notes on the planets, and then write a rap verse that describes its characteristics. *Day 2:* The students will get together and draw an illustration of their planets. They are required to have a first draft on paper, followed by the final draft on a poster board. *Day 3:* The teacher will play a Hip Hop instrumental in the classroom, while each team practices reciting their verses. After several rehearsals, the teacher will bring all the teams together to create perform the rap song, while holding up their illustrations.

Clean-Up: The students are responsible for cleaning up after each session. Part of their evaluation will be based on their ability to practice teamwork and demonstrate collective responsibility.

Closure: Once the students have completed their rap verses and illustration, they will have a review discussion.

Plans for Differentiating Instruction: Several students may have difficulty finding words that rhyme; therefore, a rhyming dictionary will be available in the classroom.

Also, there may be some students who will be frustrated with their illustrations if, for instance, the planet is not a perfect sphere. The teacher will provide several spherical objects that could be traced to alleviate this issue. Any other issues that occur will be handled accordingly.