Dr. William E. Smith

**Hip Hop ...Don’t Stop:**

How to Use Hip Hop to Effectively to Reach Your Students

**FACULTY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:**

The workshop will be a discussion of the workshop material presented in the large group presentation tailored to the faculty. This supplementary workshop will give faculty tools to use elements presented in the larger workshop in their classroom. The faculty presentation will also show faculty how to integrate new technologies and online teaching methods to improve retention of the information presented.

**WORKSHOP OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of this workshop the attendees will be able to:

- discuss the development of hip hop from its Afro-Diasporic Connections
- identify aspects of Hip Hop that can be incorporated into their syllabi and used in the classroom to enhance learning in all disciplines
- identify internet resources related to Hip Hop and African American music that can be used to assist in developing their courses and enhancing their teaching methods

**A Brief History of Hip Hop and its Connections to the African Diaspora**

The history of African American music chronicles the history of America and many of the key events and struggles of our nation are addressed in the music.

Work Songs and Field Hollers tell the story of Slavery and early American life. These forms contain the foundational elements of African American music.

Spirituals and Gospel music are the spiritual backbone of early African America. The African American community was developing and the church was a big organizing force for the community.

Blues brought together all of the coded language mechanisms and musical advances of the new African Americans and interpreted their life in a new way. It developed after the Civil War and was the new expression of free Black life.
Jazz is referred to as the “blues that’s gone to college.” As technology and the industrial revolution increased so did the complexity of the music. New chord changes, faster melodies and technical virtuosity were prized in this genre.

Funk/Soul are the black community’s attempt to reflect back on its identity. They embrace Blackness and are the musical interpretation of Afrocentricity.

Hip Hop is an attempt by the children of the funk/soul generation to reclaim their identity after the Civil Rights movement ends in assassinations and the infiltration of drugs and gangs into the community.

**Scientific connections**

Scientific developments coincide with the growth of technology in the music. The birth of the music industry coincides with the ability to mass produce recordings. Also developments in recording technology and playback help to grow the industry even more. The advances in musical instrument design and the advent of electric amplification as well as electronic instruments, help to set the stage for the birth of hip hop.

**Artistic connections**

Hip hop brings together all of the arts and in many ways art is the unifying force of the community. The term hip hop doesn’t refer to music only, it encompasses a culture that expresses itself in a specific way. Visual art, dance and theatrical performance are just as important to hip hop as is music. References to other luminaries in African American culture can help show the connections between the generations.

**Economic connections**

Just like blues, jazz and rock, hip hop became mass produced and commercialized and in fact has become commercialized the most out of all those styles. The battle for the hegemonic identity of hip hop was lost around the mid 1990s and the corporate labels have effectively framed the story of hip hop in the minds of many as a violent, misogynistic music that is only concerned with personal gain.

Hip hop became a commercially viable product with the release of “Rapper’s Delight” and has grown into a billion dollar industry. Even though this is the case the soul of hip hop remains intact and is still prevalent among many youths who relate to the authentic hip hop and culture of the earlier days. DJ and B-boy battles are still being waged and graffiti artists and MCs still practice their skills.

The key for today’s hip hop artists is the ability to use social media and the internet to make a living from their craft. It is possible and many are doing it. Hip hop has evolved
full circle to serving the community now in a different way. It provides a living for many and is a way to express political and societal commentary.

How to Incorporate the Material Into Your Curriculum

Hip Hop is an amazing educational tool. It combines vocabulary with expression bringing together the heart and the mind into an integrative experience of learning. By exposing students to a new way of experiencing the information presented in their textbooks, they become involved in the learning process by taking ownership of the information. This “ownership” is in the form of self expression through poetry and performance. Students take the information and “re-present” it in their own context. Instead of reading history they become the story tellers. “His-story” becomes “their-story.”

Sample Lesson Plans

Lesson Plans - Middle School grades 6-8

Lesson Plan 1 - Introduction: Identity/Formal and Informal Communication

Objective: Have the students distinguish between formal and informal communication

Total Time: 120 minutes

Teach the kids the chants: 5 minutes

Chants – “We don’t need nothin’ else but health wealth and knowledge of myself...”

Part 1- Identity - MC/DJ names

Time: 60 minutes

Enrichment: 30 minutes

- Do you have a nickname? (Explain the history behind it)
- Many hip hop artists and performers have stage names based on a personality or idea that they want to project about themselves. In the early years of hip hop if you were a rapper you had an MC name
- What does MC stand for (Master of Ceremony, Move the Crowd, Microphone Controller, Mic Check)
• What does it mean to MC or master the ceremony and why is it important to use energy when you communicate? (The audience will receive your communication more convincingly)

Activity: 20 minutes
Have the students create their own MC/DJ names based on whatever they feel they want to express about themselves. It could be their own nickname or something totally new.

Next have them create a symbol (“tag” or “burner”) representing their MC/DJ name.

Evaluation: 5 minutes - Display the tags and burners on the board.

Part 2 - Formal and Informal Communication
Time: 60 minutes

Enrichment: 20 minutes
Explain to the students the different circumstances where they communicate on a day-to-day basis – school, home, store, with friends. Have them talk about the differences in each situation.

Explain the definition of slang and coded communication. Use examples of texting language versus formal emails.

Activity #1: 15 minutes
Have the students perform a role playing activity where one student is a store manager and another student is applying for a job. Have them address the store manager describing their skills and why they want the job.

Activity #2: 15 minutes
Have the students perform a role playing activity where one student addresses a friend and tries to convince them into seeing a movie that
evening that the other student doesn’t want to see. Have them describe the movie and why they really want to go and try to convince the other student why they should go.

Evaluation: 10 minutes
Have the students evaluate each other on a scale of 1-10 to see if they were effective in their communication. Have them explain the difference between the formal communication used in applying for a job versus the informal communication used in discussing a movie.
Lesson Plan 2 – History of Hip Hop, The Four corners – MC, DJ, Graffiti, B-Boy

Objective: Expose the students to the history of hip hop, the elements of hip hop (the four corners) and come up with their own MC/DJ names

Time: 120 minutes

Set-up:

Display a map of NY, pencils, colored pens, construction paper, markers, poster board

Chants and Freestyles (5 minutes) –
“We don’t need nothing else but health wealth and knowledge of myself…”
“What time is it... Time to rise…”

Enrichment: 35 minutes

- Discuss the four corners of hip hop (MC, DJ, B-Boy, Graffiti)
- Talk about some of the reasons why hip hop came about
- Money divested from music and art programs in NYC schools
- Students needed an artistic outlet
- Gangs became too violent and the leaders came together to use hip hop as a way to release aggression
- Battle culture expressed in art rather than violence (MC battles, DJ battles, B-boy battles, Graffiti battles)
- Name some key early MCs (Melle Mel, Grandmaster Caz, Kool Moe Dee, KRS-One, Dougie Fresh, Slick Rick, Run DMC)
- Name some key early DJs (Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, Jam Master Jay, Jazzy Jeff)
- Name some key early Breakers (Crazy Legs, Mr. Wiggles, Rock Steady Crew, NYC Breakers)
- Name some key early Graph artists (Seen in NYC, Lady Pink in NYC, Cool Disco Dan in DC)
Activity #1: 50 minutes

Watch first part of Beat Street up till the scene at the Roxy and ask the students the following questions:

1. What are the characters looking for? What are they trying to achieve? (recognition, fame)
2. Why is it so important for them to get “discovered” (identity, self-determination)
3. How do they go about getting it? (MC/DJ names, fashion, language, movement styles, graffiti)
4. What do the breakers in the breakdance circle look like they are doing (fighting)
5. Can you see how breakdancing became a substitute for gang fights?

Activity #2: 30 minutes

Have them create some easy 3-4 part dance routines based on some early hip hop moves (the snake, the cabbage patch, the wop, the robot, the running man, etc.).

Use Virtual DJ Software to have students mix songs together. They will see the amount of skill needed to be a first rate DJ.

Put the DJs and Dancers together for a 3-minute performance.
Websites

Free lesson plans and media from the government
http://free.ed.gov/

Library of Congress National Jukebox
http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/

Davey D Hip Hop History Archive
http://daveyd.com/

Virtual DJ Software
http://www.soft82.com/get/download/Windows/Virtual_DJ

Graffiti Creator
http://graffiticreator.net/

International Hip Hop Scholars Association (IHHSA)
http://ihhsa.org/

Dr. William E. Smith’s Online Bookstore
http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/willsmithq

Hip Hop Education Literacy Program (H.E.L.P.)
http://www.edlyrics.com/

Movies and Documentaries

Beat Street – Fictional account of early hip hop but shows the four corners integrated into a story with real artists from the period (Kool Herc, Kurtis Blow, Rock Steady Crew)

Jazz by Ken Burns – Series documentary about jazz and some of the luminaries in the field. Has some good discussion about political and historical contexts surrounding the music and its development

When We Were Kings – Documentary about Muhammed Ali and the Rumble in the Jungle. Shows the colorful and poetic personality of one of the first MCs and how he overcame all odds to defeat an almost unbeatable opponent.

Tupac Resurrection – Documentary about Tupac that shows his connections to the Black Panther party through his mother and his development from the Baltimore School for the Arts to the personality he became.
Youtube Clips

James Brown
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4Pg7MOTEEw

Parliament Funkadelic – Give Up The Funk
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjKFCYzqq-A

Muhammed Ali
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8fGO-o52G0&feature=fvsr

Pigmeat Markham – The Judge
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvMBxl62c0

Fatback Band - King Tim III
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ig3313DhcB8&feature=related

Afrika Bambaata - Planet Rock
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v.hh1AypBalEe&feature=related

Kraftwerk - trans Europe Express
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBGNITPqQII

Kurtis Blow - The Breaks
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZDUelS5M4

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five - The Message
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40hXxydbjig&feature=related

Sugarhill Gang - Rapper's Delight
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUqvpJ3cbUQ&feature=related

Fat Boys - The Human Beatbox
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJewbFZHI34&feature=related

Dougie Fresh and Slick Rick - La Di Da Di
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYHm-B0tnCs&feature=related

UTFO- Roxanne, Roxanne
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KpngczmD7Q

Roxanne Shante
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ckRNcHCKA
Salt and Pepa - Push It
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCadcBR95oU

Queen Latifah - Ladies First
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wI9OkO-rMns

Books