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## Hip-Hop Education Resources

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## Hip-Hop Education Resources

Marcella Runell Hall

*University of Massachusetts Amherst and The Hip-Hop Association*

A debate about the effectiveness of hip-hop and education might well have been cutting edge in 1978 as hip-hop was blossoming in the New York City underground scene or 1987 when radio personality and social commentarian Davey D. (David Cook) turned in his master's thesis on hip-hop entitled "The Power of Hip-Hop," or even in 1998 when *Time* magazine declared the hip-hop takeover as evidenced through Lauryn Hill's Grammy triumph that same year. Yet in 2009, it still seems cutting edge to many people, despite the fact that hip-hop has been around for over 30 years and so have many of the educator/fans/artists who have been studying it and utilizing it for educational purposes.

Houston Baker, author of *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy* (1993), called on the public to embrace hip-hop as tool for educating as early as 1990 in *Jet* magazine. It is widely known now that Michelle Pfeiffer's character in the film, *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 1995), who portrayed teacher Louanne Johnson, actually used Public Enemy lyrics to successfully teach her students, not Bob Dylan lyrics as Hollywood portrayed. Hip-hop in education is not new; not even in the high school classroom. El Puente Academy in Brooklyn, New York began incorporating hip-hop into the curriculum in the early 1990s. Most recently, New York University has created an award-winning Hip-Hop & Pedagogy Initiative housed in the Center for Multicultural Education and Programs under the Division of Student Affairs.

Hip-hop music and culture are often cited as being public pedagogy, meaning the music itself has intrinsic educational value. Classes on hip-hop are offered at Berkeley, Stanford, Michigan, Yale, MIT, NYU, Princeton, University of Massachusetts, and Columbia. In fact it is estimated that there are over 300 courses on hip-hop being taught in the United States currently, and Howard University, after being the first to bring hip-hop to the academy in 1991 will soon have a hip-hop studies minor. Cheznia Germany hosted the first international "Hip-Hop Meets Academia" conference in August 2006, and the University of Wisconsin Madison has created a comprehensive four-year interdisciplinary living-learning program of study focused explicitly on the celebration and study of hip-hop culture, which started in June 2007.

In 2007, self-proclaimed hip-hop head and educator Tony Muhammad called for like-minded educators to "take their hip-hop selves out of the closet to do what needs to be done to reach students and build a bridge with the students" by starting a popular Myspace blog entitled "Trials of a Hip-Hop Educator."

Non-profit organizations and individual educators have graciously taken the lead in utilizing hip-hop to educate. Organizations including H2Ed based in New York City, the University of Hip-Hop based in Chicago, and the International Association of Hip-Hop Education based in Washington, DC are just a few. Hip-hop education is also popular in religious and spiritual organizations across the U.S., including mosques, synagogues, and churches. These and countless other organizations, such as Blackout Arts Collective, have pioneered the connection between hip-hop, education, and activism in schools, correctional facilities, and out-of-school time spaces.

As the academy continues to debate its effectiveness, teachers and community organizers are moving forward. Below is a brief list of educator resources, including lesson plans, curriculum guides, notable organizations, articles, books, and Web sites. It is meant to be a starting point for various resources available on how to learn more about hip-hop and education. Many of these resources have a social justice lens or systems analysis in their use of and relationship to hip-hop. Others, while useful and innovative, do not address issues of systemic or institutional oppression but can still be engaging tools for students and educators.

### ARTICLES

Alridge, D. P. (2005). From civil rights to hip hop: Toward a nexus of ideas. *The Journal of African American History*, 90(3), 226–252.

A comprehensive article focusing on the civil rights movement and its impact on current hip-hop culture political movements.

Brown, V. (2006). Guiding the influence of hip hop music on middle school students' feelings, thinking, and behaving. *The Negro Educational Review*, 57(1/2), 49–68.

A psychological approach to reaching children through music and the music industry.

Guy, T. C. (2004). Gangsta rap and adult education. *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education* (101), 43–57.

Looks at the use of culture (and space) in terms of education.

Hamanci, R. (2007, March 5). Academic hip-hop? Yes, yes y'all. *San Francisco Chronicle*. Available: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/03/05/DDG3MOE3041.DTL>

Provides a current overview of the hip-hop and education movement, with particular attention focused on higher education.

Morrell, E., & Duncan-Andrade, J. (2002). Toward a critical classroom discourse: Promoting academic literacy through engaging hip-hop culture with urban youth. *English Journal*, 91(6), 88–94.

Practical application of theory written by classroom teachers for classroom teachers.

Pride, F. (2007, May/June). School of hip-hop. *Black Issues Book Review*, 24–25. Available: <http://www.hiphopassociation.org/education> (to view article and download press kit). Discusses how urban educators use hip-hop to help students succeed academically.

Runell Hall, M. (2006, September). Hip-hop education 101. *Vibe Online Exclusive* Available: [www.vibe.com/news/online\\_exclusives/2006/09/hip\\_hop\\_education\\_101/](http://www.vibe.com/news/online_exclusives/2006/09/hip_hop_education_101/)

Gives an overview of hip-hop education as a social movement.

### BOOKS

Bynoe, Y. (2004). *Stand and deliver: Political activism, leadership, and hip hop culture*. New York: Soft Skull.

- Illustrates how hip-hop generation leadership can work toward creating a more equitable United States.
- Bynoe, Y. (Ed.). (2005). *The encyclopedia of rap and hip hop culture*. Westport, CT: Greenwood. This is the seminal text for decoding hip-hop cultural history by a noted educator/activist.
- Chang, J. (2005). *Can't stop won't stop: A history of the hip-hop generation*. New York: Picador. Chronicles the hip-hop generation's sociopolitical history in detail from its formation to its inclusion in popular culture.
- Dimitriadis, G. (2001). *Performing identity/performing culture: Hip hop pedagogy, and lived practice*. New York: Lang. Addresses the lived experience in and through hip-hop culture and provides a pedagogical conclusion.
- George, N. (1998). *Hip hop America*. New York: Viking Penguin. Works nicely in concert with Kitwana's *The Hip-Hop Generation*.
- Ginwright, S. A. (2004). *Black in school: Afrocentric reform, urban youth, and the promise of hip hop culture*. New York: Teachers College Press. Practical application based on a case study of how hip-hop was used to teach a culturally relevant, Afrocentric curriculum in an Oakland school.
- Kitwana, B. (2003). *The hip-hop generation*. New York: Basic Civitas. Offers perspective on the disproportionate social and political troubles of the hip-hop generation, and celebrates the activism and politics of the generation.
- Morrell, E. (2004). *Linking literacy and popular culture: Finding connections for lifelong learning*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon. Helps educators learn how to promote academic and critical literacy through curricula and pedagogy that is inclusive and culturally-relevant.
- Neal, M. A., & Forman, M. (2004). *That's the joint! The hip-hop studies reader*. New York: Routledge. An anthology chronicling over 25 years of hip-hop essays. Sections include timely and historic pieces that can be used in introductory hip-hop studies courses.
- Parmar, P., & Petersen, J. (2008). *Hip-hop in the English classroom*. New York: Lang. Highlights best practices for using hip-hop for critical education.
- Pride, F. (2007). *The message: 100 life lessons from hip-hop's greatest songs*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press. Shines light on positive lessons in hip-hop and includes a discussion guide. Discussion guide, sample syllabus, and extensive lesson plans on how to best utilize the book can be found at <http://www.feliciapride.com>
- Stanley, T. (Ed.). (2008). *The encyclopedia of hip-hop literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood. A collection of entries that highlight the incredible amount of fiction stories, biographies, and other impactful written pieces created by members of the hip-hop generation.

## EDUCATIONAL CDS

- Beady, C. (2001). *Whatever it takes 2 motivate 2-daze youth* [CD]. Piney Woods, MS: Beady. A relevant educational tool created by a principal, geared toward teacher education students.

Clark, R. (2003). *The essential raps* [CD]. Atlanta, GA: Clark.

Teaches the Presidents, the bones of the body, and other interesting and useful lessons including knowledge about Martin Luther King, Jr., and South Africa using hip-hop.

Kajitani, A. (2006). *The rappin' mathematician* [CD]. Los Angeles, CA: Kajitani.

Provides teachers, parents and students of all ages with rap songs about math and living a positive life.

Kwina, N. (2005). *Hip science: The human body 101* [CD]. Oakland, CA: Kwina.

Rhymes about the parts of the human body from the lungs, skin, blood, and heart.

Ohene. (2004). *Rapademics* [CD]. Philadelphia, PA: Kawann Shockley.

Teaches a course on emceeing at Temple University, samples Einstein in one song, and then uses some of Einstein's theories as metaphors for developing his identity as a powerful emcee.

**RAPADEMICS<sup>®</sup>** (RAP + ACADEMICS) uses songs with catchy melodies and popular hip-hop beats to teach educational fundamentals. RAPADEMIC<sup>®</sup> began as an idea to utilize the appeal and popularity of Rap Music and Hip Hop culture to educate and make a positive impact on the lives of youth. In addition to teaching core components of early childhood curriculum, the products also emphasize self-worth, high expectations, morals and values, personal responsibility, a healthy drug-free lifestyle, self-respect and respect for others. (<http://www.rapademics.com>).

**Bassline Entertainment.** Represents creative and inspirational educational CDs that teach important life lessons (<http://www.myspace.com/Basslineent>).

## FILMS

Hurt, B. (2006). *Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*. Plainfield, NJ: God Bless the Child Productions.

Analyzes the relationship between hip-hop and gender roles and is available with a teacher's guide.

*Lyrical Minded: Enhancing Literacy through Popular Culture and Spoken Word Poetry*. (2005). BlackOut Arts Collective.

From a project of College Now, School of Education at Brooklyn College. The aim of the project was to raise students' and teachers' critical awareness of the ways in which the popular media shape individuals' conceptions of self and of the world.

Morikawa, K. (2005). *Reading between the Rhymes*. (self published) [www.readingbetweentheines.com](http://www.readingbetweentheines.com)

Award-winning documentary explores the efforts of hip-hop educators across the United States.

Raimist, R. (1999). *Nobody Knows My Name*. Women Make Movies. [www.wmm.com/orderinfo/how\\_to\\_order.shtml](http://www.wmm.com/orderinfo/how_to_order.shtml)

Tells the story of five young women connected by their love of hip-hop and their uphill battle to make it in the male-dominated hip-hop industry.

Ruskin, M., & Rosenberg, S. K. (Directors.). (2006). *The hip-hop project* [Film]. United States: Pressure Point Films. [www.hiphopproject.com](http://www.hiphopproject.com)

Documentary that follows a group of New York City youth who use their life stories to produce an inspiring album through their work with the non-profit group ArtStart. The Hip-Hop Project is a story of hope and healing and the power of hip-hop.

Threat, J. (Director). (2006). *dead prez: It's Bigger than Hip Hop*.

Chronicles the Black Power movement and the history of activism in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## LESSON PLANS/CURRICULA

*And You Don't Stop: 30 Years of Hip-Hop*.

VH1's free curriculum to accompany their hip-hop programming Available: [http://www.vh1.com/partners/vh1\\_music\\_studio/supplies/specials/downloads/hip\\_hop2-lesson5.pdf#search=%22hip-hop%20lesson%20plans%22](http://www.vh1.com/partners/vh1_music_studio/supplies/specials/downloads/hip_hop2-lesson5.pdf#search=%22hip-hop%20lesson%20plans%22)

Benn, G. *Hip-Hop as an Educational Literacy Program (H.E.L.P.)*.

A series of supplemental reading workbooks designed to HELP students of all reading levels through the innovative usage of hip-hop lyrics for critical analysis, multicultural relevance, and effective literacy instruction. Available: <http://www.edlyrics.com/>

Calderon, J., Miranda, E., Quintero S., & Runell Hall, M. (2008). *Conscious Women Rock the Page: Using Hip-Hop Fiction to Incite Social Change*. New York: Lulu/Sisteroutsider.

A standards-referenced comprehensive curriculum that uses three popular hip-hop fiction novels to teach about social justice issues.

*Flocabulary*.

Fosters literacy and academic success through hip-hop with its two curricula—The Word Up Project and Flocabulary: SAT Vocabulary. Their website also has several free lesson plans. Available: <http://www.flocabulary.com/teacher/lessonplanmosdef.html>

*The Hip-Hop Circuit*.

Hosts free lesson plans, articles, and unit materials. Available: <http://hiphopcircuit.com/teachersup.htm>

Irby, D. J. *Art Sanctuary*.

A free, downloadable, interdisciplinary standards-based curriculum called, "Do the Knowledge," created by a community educator and hip-hop enthusiast. Available; <http://www.artsanctuary.org>

Just Think. *Flipping the Script: Critical Thinking in a Hip-Hop World*.

A curriculum for teaching students media literacy and other topics using hip-hop music and culture. Available: <http://www.justthink.org>

*Lesson Planet*.

Offers a free 7-day trial to view interesting lesson plans that focus on hip-hop and dance. Available: <http://www.lessonplanet.com>

*The New York Times*.

Provides free interdisciplinary lessons for educators teaching grades 6-12, with 15 lessons specifically using hip-hop. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/learning>

*PBS*.

Provides a free lesson plan on Transcending Jazz, Poetry and Hip-Hop Available: <http://www.pbs.org/jazz/classroom/transcend.htm>

*Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.*

After hosting one of the first Summer Teacher Institutes for teachers called Using Hip-Hop to Elevate, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame created a comprehensive list of free interdisciplinary lesson plans provided by educators on various genres of music for various grade levels, including hip-hop. Available: <http://www.rockhall.com/programs/plans.asp>

Runell Hall, M., & Diaz, M. (2007). *The Hip-Hop Education Guidebook: Volume 1*. New York: Hip Hop Association.

Compilation of interdisciplinary standards-referenced hip-hop education lesson plans submitted by educators across the U.S. and Canada.

Sitomer, A., & Cirelli, M. *Hip-Hop Poetry and the Classics for the Classroom*

Instructional guide for how to incorporate hip-hop into the classroom specifically through language arts skills. Available: <http://hiphopintheclass.com>

*WISE (Working to Improve Schools and Education).*

Ithaca College hosts a web site that has free lesson plans, articles, and other useful resources on hip-hop and education. Available: [http://www.ithaca.edu/wise/topics/hip\\_hop.htm](http://www.ithaca.edu/wise/topics/hip_hop.htm)

*United Human Rights Handbook.*

Offers ten free lesson plans that utilize some hip-hop. Available: <http://www.unitedmusicvideo.org/html/lessonplan.html>

Yale-New Haven Teacher's Institute. *Graffiti.*

A three-part lesson on graffiti as social commentary and artistic expression. Available: <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1993/4/93.04.04.x.html>

## ORGANIZATIONS

**B-Girl Bench** offers professional development opportunities and educational resources for women in hip-hop as well as connects women hip-hop artists with education, activist, and cultural organizations in the Pacific Northwest region (<http://www.bgirlbench.com>).

**Blackout Arts Collective (BAC)** is a grassroots coalition of artists, activists, and educators working to empower communities of color through the arts. They use the tools of culture and education to raise awareness and catalyze action around the critical issues that impact communities of color. They believe in the power of the creative process to transform lives, mobilize communities, and build a more just society and have been using hip-hop to educate since 1997 (<http://www.blackoutartscollective.org>).

**Brooklyn Arts & Media High School (BCAM)** is a small public high school of 100 students per grade located in the predominantly working-class neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. BCAM relies on a collaborative model that places school, family, and community in active partnership. In addition to its performance-based academic emphasis, BCAM possesses an urban-based, arts media focus. Attempting to both engage and challenge today's hip-hop youth media culture, BCAM students interact with various media through critical, inquiry-based artistic efforts and professional experiences.

The **Brotherhood/Sister Sol** is a Harlem-based organization with a mission to empower Black and Latino young women and men to develop into critical thinkers and community leaders. It is not simply an organization; more accurately, it is a way of life. Providing youth with an opportunity to explore their ideas, identity, and future among peers with the support and

guidance of their immediate elders is a natural method of promoting positive development into adulthood. Brotherhood/Sister Sol have been using hip-hop culture to engage students for more than a decade (<http://www.brotherhoodsistersol.org>).

**El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice** is a community-based human rights institution that promotes leadership for peace and justice through the engagement of members (youth and adult) in the arts, education, scientific research, wellness, and environmental action. El Puente educators created two hip-hop education curricula: RAP—Rhythm and Poetry uses hip-hop lyrics and poetry to teach English and Sankofa—Using Hip-Hop and Story-telling and Cultural History to teach Social Studies (<http://www.elpuente.us/homepage.htm>).

The **Hip-Hop Association** is a 501(c)(3) media, education, and arts community-building organization whose projects are designed to encourage critical thinking, education reform, cross-cultural unity, and civic engagement. The Hip-Hop Association's education initiative (H2Ed) was founded with the premise that Hip-Hop, one of the most influential cultural forces today, has the ability to educate, inform, and empower today's youth. They offer a Hip-Hop education teacher summit, The *Defuse* newsletter, and a wealth of hip-hop education resources (<http://www.hiphopassociation.org>).

**Hip-Hop Congress** provides the hip-hop generation with the information, tools, and resources to respond to social, economic, and political conditions with special attention to creating and education agenda. There are approximately 70 chapters nationwide (<http://www.hiphopcongress.com>).

**Hip-Hop Matters**, Executive Director Andrew Ryan, hosts a website with educational resources (<http://www.hiphopmatters.org>) as well as information on *The Journal of Hip-Hop*, which provides a space for critical dialogue about hip-hop culture (<http://www.johh.org>).

**Hip-Hop Theater Festival** invigorates the fields of theater and hip-hop by nurturing the creation of innovative work within the hip-hop aesthetic; presenting and touring artists whose work addresses the socio-political issues relevant to the hip-hop generation; and serving young, urban communities through outreach and education that celebrates contemporary language and culture (<http://www.hiphoptheaterfest.org>).

**Loop Dreams** created by Kanye West and his mother Dr. Donda West, is an innovative education program dedicated to keeping at-promise students in school through the creation of engaging curriculum, providing studio equipment in schools and encouraging strong leadership (<http://www.erniebarnes.com/kanyewestfoundation.html>).

**Seattle Debate** is a 501(c)(3) organization that utilizes hip-hop, spoken word, music, and culture in traditional policy debate to middle schools, high schools, and community centers (<http://www.seattledebate.org>).

The **Temple of Hip Hop**, founded by KRS-ONE, promotes, preserves, and protects hip-hop as a strategy toward health, love, awareness, and wealth (<http://www.templeofhiphop.org>).

The **University of Hip Hop** provides a useful model for educators seeking to implement hip-hop education programs (<http://uhiphop.uchicago.edu>).

**Urban League**, in partnership with Russell Simmons, created a literacy program for NYC high school students called Hip-Hop Reader. Their mission is to enable African Americans and other marginalized people to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights (<http://www.nul.org/hiphopreader.html>).

**Urban Word NYC<sup>TM</sup>** exists to ensure that New York City youth have a safe, supportive, dynamic, and challenging community in which to discover their powerful voices through written and

spoken word, and to use their talents to express their views, strengthen self-esteem, and engage in opportunities that address the sociopolitical issues that affect them as New York City youth (<http://www.urbanwordnyc.org/>).

**We Got Issues!** has a mission is to ignite the next generation of young women leaders and awaken a new brand of social/political activism in America. We Got Issues! has utilized a hip-hop curriculum since its inception in 2004 to accomplish this mission (<http://www.wegotissues.org/>).

**Words Beats & Life, Inc.** transforms university classrooms and campuses through hip-hop culture via interactive workshops, exhibitions, and gallery installations. This is accomplished through the DC *Urban Arts Academy*. A multi-medium hip-hop arts Academy was their first initiative, *Words Beats Life: The Global Journal of Hip-Hop*, and a they have an emerging initiative, *The Cipher: A Hip-Hop Business Incubator* (<http://www.wblinc.org/>).

**World Up** is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public about international cultures and issues that affect the global community through hip-hop. Through ongoing events, educational programming, and an annual music festival, World Up actively promotes and fosters diversity, cross-cultural understanding, and social change through hip-hop culture (<http://www.worldup.org/>).

**Youth Speaks** empowers the next generation of leaders, self-defined artists, and visionary activists through written and oral literacies. They challenge youth to find, develop, publicly present, and apply their voices as creators of social change. Founded in 1996, Youth Speaks is the leading nonprofit presenter of Spoken Word performance, education, and youth development programs in the country. Youth Speaks also offers a comprehensive slate of literary arts education programs during the school day and after-school hours, and conducts numerous publications and youth development programs. Youth Speaks works with 45,000 teens per year in the Bay Area alone, and has created partner programs in 36 cities across the United States (<http://youthspeaks.org/>).

The Seattle chapter of **Zulu Nation** links educators with experienced teaching hip-hop artists in the Northwest and provides calendars on upcoming hip-hop cultural and educational events in the region (<http://www.206zulu.com/>). Other **Zulu Nation** chapters can be found on the national web site (<http://www.zulunation.com/>).

## WEBSITES

Hip-hop historian, journalist, deejay and activist, Davey Downs, operates **Davey D's Hip-Hop Corner**, one of the oldest and largest hip-hop websites. This is an excellent resource for educators interested in bringing timely current events to class utilizing a politically hip-hop lens (<http://www.daveyd.com/>).

**dead prez** has a website that offers relevant educational information on various topics for the community including arts and activism (<http://www.bossupbu.com/>).

The mission of the **Hip Hop Archive Portal**, housed at Stanford University, is in part to facilitate and encourage the pursuit of knowledge by creating a resource guide of hip-hop-related books, articles, and courses (<http://www.hiphoparchive.org/>).

The **Hip-Hop Education Wiki**, sponsored by the Hip-Hop Association, is a tool created specifically for hip-hop educators and hip-hop education research. It includes resources like links to valuable online resources, online activities, and learning models that use hip-hop culture

as a pedagogical tool. There is also an extensive collection of children's books and early childhood resources (<http://h2edwiki.wetpaint.com>).

The **R.E.A.C.H.** Web site stands for Representing Education, Activism and Community through hip-hop (<http://www.hiphopliveshere.com>).

**Tools of War** created by Pop Master Jorge "Fabel" Pabon of the legendary Rock Steady crew and his wife Christy Z Pabon who believe there are many "tools" one can use in competing/battling within hip-hop culture: turntables, microphones, paint, one's body, and especially one's voice. The idea behind Tools of War is to inform and educate people regarding not only hip-hop culture but also many other social and political issues. They have a global hip-hop newsletter that reaches hundreds of thousands of hip-hop educators, activists, and artists (<http://myspace.com/toolsofwar>).

**TRGGR radio** is a meeting ground for grassroots hip-hop culture, music, and politics. Founded by hip-hop intellectuals and community educators, Carlos McBride, Anthony Ratcliff, and Chris Tinson, they use the term "triggr" to mean sparking new ideas, new ways of thought and new ways of being. They are seeking to "triggr" the transmission of knowledge for self and community education (<http://www.myspace.com/trggrradio>).

**Daniel Zarazua**, an Oakland-based teacher and DJ (DJ Chino), hosts a web site with up-to-date information on education and identity (<http://www.domingoyu.com>).

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