



Teaching and Learning

with



Culture

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In my preschool classroom, I heard children singing and humming popular hip-hop songs during pretend play. To honor their interests, support their learning, and connect with their culture, I decided to incorporate aspects of hip-hop culture into the curriculum. When teachers learn about and connect with children's cultures, they show they value the whole child. Culture opens a door to many possibilities.

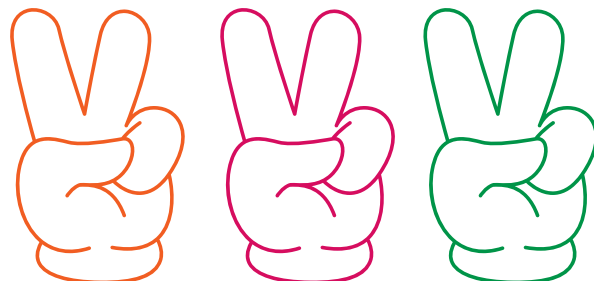
What Is Hip-Hop Culture?

Hip-hop culture is an artistic, musical, physical, and visual mode of communication that people use to express their experiences, beliefs, and emotions. Rap music (spoken or chanted rhyming lyrics performed in time to a beat) is one of the four key stylistic elements of hip-hop culture, in addition to deejaying/scratching, break dancing, and graffiti writing (word art).

Instead of the commercialized rap commonly heard on the radio, instructional/educational rap—or inspirational rap—is more appropriate for young children and offers multiple opportunities for teaching and learning. Through music and language, movement, and the visual arts, rap and other elements of hip-hop culture can support preschoolers' learning and development in all domains.

Forms of Expression

Children share their experiences, ideas, and feelings in diverse ways. Hip-hop culture offers children many opportunities for self-expression while having fun and honing their communication skills.





Rapping/Emceeing

Creating and speaking raps, chants, or class poetry to a musical beat to share ideas and emotions. After reading aloud a book about being loving, such as *One Love*, by Cedella Marley, invite the children's reactions, then compose and perform a brief rap together.



Deejaying

Playing music for an audience by using audio equipment (CD player, MP3 player, turntable). Instead of the usual circle and song time, try throwing a mini dance party, with a deejay hosting. Taking the role of class deejay, a child can select an educational hip-hop CD and operate the CD player for the class.



Breaking

Dancing using creative, expressive, and complex movements. Children can take turns performing their favorite break dance moves for their classmates, including crisscrossing their legs or moving their arms across their midlines to the beat of a hip-hop tune. (Crossing the midline, a child spontaneously moves a hand or foot to the other side of the body—movement that connects the brain with the body—bilateral integration.)



Word Art

Creating visual representations of ideas, beliefs, and emotions using words, symbols, and colors. Children can use blank index cards, dry-erase boards, or pieces of paper to draw their names. Using paint on bulletin board paper, children can create a graffiti mural about their neighborhood, their family, or a topic the class has been studying. After talking with children individually about their contributions, the teacher can help them label their art, then display the mural on a wall.



Beatboxing

Creating beats and rhythm using the mouth as an instrument.



Incorporating Social Justice Themes

Raising social awareness by composing and reciting rhythmic verse about an important social topic, like keeping the planet clean. Children and teachers can create brief lyrics based on children's thoughts and experiences, and the class can perform them together.



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Benefits of Hip-Hop in the Classroom



Elements of hip-hop culture can support children's learning and development in all domains: social and emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, and physical.

Social and Emotional

Express Yourself!

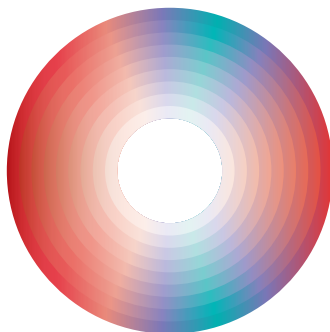
Hip-hop encourages children to share their thoughts and feelings in creative ways. It supports children's experimentation while building their self-esteem.

To make hip-hop part of the curriculum

- Introduce children to different hip-hop experiences or elements, such as rap, break dancing, and word art. Ask them how the music, beat, art, or dance makes them feel.
- Talk together about a particular classroom activity, such as the emergence of a butterfly from its chrysalis or a chick from its egg.
- Support children in sharing their ideas and feelings by offering social and emotional vocabulary (excited, exhausted, surprising) for them to use in a rap, a break dance, or word art to describe their response to the activity.
- Provide children with opportunities to discuss emotions. After listening to a rap, ask them how they think the author/rapper felt, or invite them to listen again and then create word art based on the rap.
- When teachers learn about and connect with children's culture, they show they value the whole child. Culture opens a door to many possibilities.

→ Language and Literacy Development: Just Say It!

Many preschoolers enjoy experimenting with and exploring early literacy components—letters, words, sounds in words. Music is an effective way to engage children and supports both phonemic awareness and language development.



Use hip-hop elements to foster language and literacy development



- Record children rapping. Combine the “tracks” to create a classroom rap album. Create accompanying lyric booklets for children and families, so they can follow along or perform them at home.
- Create raps for each letter of the alphabet. “C is for cat / She sleeps on the hat.” Encourage children to explore the rhymes and rhythms in raps: “Sat, bat, hat, cat, I like to dance on my mat.”
- Find or create a simple poem—or use a poem the children are already familiar with—and read it aloud. Pronounce words slowly and clearly to allow the children to feel the words and sounds. Invite children to recite the poem to the rhythm of different beats.

Cognitive Development: Think About It!

Preschoolers are naturally curious about the world around them. The following approaches can help you learn more about the children in your program, using hip-hop to support you in differentiating instruction.

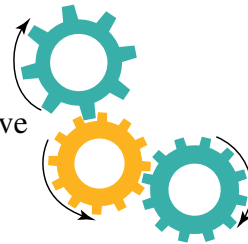


- Have children create and recite simple rhymes or raps about topics they are studying.
- Ask open-ended questions about the poems or raps.
- Encourage children to ask each other questions about their raps, word art, or break dance moves - They will gain new perspectives about their classmates and friends. Children learn how their ideas are similar and different while also appreciating their own work and the work of others.
- Provide opportunities for children to compare and contrast their hip-hop projects.

Physical Development: Move with It!

Children and teachers build a sense of community by learning from and supporting each other’s creative movements. Children move for fun—but they also express themselves through their bodies.

- Provide instrumental hip-hop music or classroom-created rap music so children can act as class deejay by choosing music for the class to dance to.
- Have children create dance moves alone, with partners, and as a whole class.
- Create a class music video of the children performing their rap and dance moves. The video can serve as documentation of children’s physical development.



Mr. B

Mr. B's Class Creates a Recycling Rap

After outdoor play one day, Mr. B's preschoolers were upset about all the trash on the playground. Talking with the class about the problem, Mr. B asked, "What happens if we pollute the Earth?" The children responded with thoughts like, "The water will be nasty" and "We will breathe dirty air." Mr. B helped the children craft a rap about recycling.

RECYCLE RAP

Helping our planet begins with you!

Polluting our Earth is the wrong thing to do!

Helping hands is what you should give!

Many things will happen to the place that we live!

Animals don't eat plastic for food!

So we have to stay in the recycling mood!

We can't breathe dirty air!

Recycle! Recycle to show that you care!

Try Hip-Hop in Your Classroom

Hip-hop has been inspirational for the children in my classroom. With hip-hop activities, they are more engaged and creative because hip-hop is familiar, meaningful, and relevant to them. My hope is that other teachers will use these concepts and approaches to foster fuller participation and engaged learning through an exploration of hip-hop.

Classroom Playlist

Artist: Anthony Broughton

Songs: "Clean up as a Team," "Good-Day,"

"Months of the Year," "Patterns," "The B-Glide,"

"Counting to 100" misterbinspires.com

CD: In the B-Hive With MISTER B

Artist: Eddie Peeples

Song: "EP Shuffle"

CD: Sing a Song

Artist: Aaron Nigel Smith

Song: "One Love"

families.NAEYC.org/song/one-love

Artist: Kobie Wilkerson

Song: "Getting Ready" (single)

lkobiedawiz.com/category/music

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