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Aligning Hip-Hop, Curriculum, Standards, and Potential

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Peering into your brown bodies
I see the power of the digital divide
The gulf of separation
That pours the distance
Between you and them
They—who have access not just to
Internet
But to PowerPoint and higher order technological thinking

Feeling your soul reflecting into mine
I know that you must learn to manipulate this
This power, this capital, this
Technology needed to place you on par

Looking into your heart
I knew
That I had to tap into your strengths
Be mindful of your critical abilities
And work to teach from your strengths

Listening to your words
I chose to begin with
Music, CD covers, hip-hop, culture, and image
Not open, save, format, and apply design

Moving into conversation with you
With educators, teachers, administrators, and researchers
We discuss and envision the potential in this pedagogy
And the divide is still not conquered or erased
But we are armed with yet one more tool.

Nadjwa E. L. Norton

In writing the poem above, I set the context for this article within the social-political everyday nature of the digital divide. In particular, I call attention to the original concerns about the digital divide that raised awareness about the lack of computer and

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Internet access of poor and ethnic minority children compared to middle class White[1] children (Pearson, 2002). Further, although the disparity in computer ownership between struggling class ethnic minorities and Whites is decreasing, the digital divide has expanded far beyond computer ownership. It now also includes disparities in the access that children have to printers, paper, ink, scanners, software, and technological pedagogical practices (Knight, Dixon, Norton, & Bentley, 2004). Many educational researchers with an equity lens detail a variety of dimensions of the digital divide and explore access to the aforementioned technology and pedagogical practices in home, school, and community environments (Swain & Pearson, 2003).

A similar equity lens is embedded in my poem as well as the works of scholars such as Valdez and Duran (2007) and Swain and Pearson (2003), positing that educators who provide children with low-level and low-interest technology experiences are solidifying the digital divide. Currently, research about the digital divide asserts that high-level standards and effective pedagogical practices that integrate technology with academics enhance learning environments (Smith, 2002). Attention is being paid to illuminating for educators and administrators that they have the power to diminish this digital divide by growing more adept with technology, weaving technology into the content areas, and revaluating and revising their current technology-related curricula (Swain & Pearson, 2003). In many cases, educators will have to refrain from using computers as reward systems, change their perceptions of the relevance of computers in school, and organize classroom management and pedagogical strategies that best utilize limited resources (Moore, Laffey, Espinosa, & Lodree, 2002).

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[1] For the purposes of this manuscript the Norton is using APA guidelines to capitalize White and Black because they are situated as proper noun social groups.

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In order for these pedagogical teaching shifts to occur, they must be accompanied by the belief that all children can learn. Such constructs are evidenced in the poem above and speak to the urgency for educators to become more conscious about the choices that they make to engage students' technological abilities. Even educators who have high degrees of access may have to reconsider moving away from low use and low-level usage of the technology in an effort to stop increasing the inequities (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Natriello, 2001) Rather than finding ways to implement drill-and-skill activities or directed teaching software into already existing pedagogies, efforts may be designed to promote more creativity, problem-solving abilities, and inquiry skills (Sternberg, Kaplan, & Borck, 2007). In a similar vein, researchers are calling for educators, as part of their reflection processes, to consider motivation, social processes, and the willingness of children to experiment and interact with technology (Warschauer, 2003). Despite what we have come to know through the literature, educators are still searching for ways to support struggling class ethnic minority children. Seeking to overcome these challenges, scholars such as Beilke and Stuve (2004) present small pockets of hope by demonstrating how urban middle school children integrate technology and literacy for the purposes of construction, communication, and expression. They offer viable suggestions for the ways in which educators may work with children via digital video technology to close the gaps, promote higher order thinking, and encourage technical competence. Like Goetze and Walker (2004), who see the potential of drawing on technology, specifically Hyperstudio graphics and drawings, they make space for ethnic minority children to produce images and other sign systems that communicate complex meanings.

It is within this conversation that the opening poem and this article belong. This article offers some springboards for educators and researchers that allow for the integration of critical thinking, higher order meaning-making, technology, popular culture music, and literacies. I seek to contribute to the field opportunities for children to interact with technology to create visual sign systems in a manner that strengthens both their technology and literacy abilities. First, I build theoretical and conceptual

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frameworks that highlight culturally responsive pedagogy and contextualize hip-hop as a culture. Next, I offer two standards-based, technology-infused literacy lessons implemented with second through eighth grade children in urban alternative schools and educational afterschool programs. The first example details how children made meaning about the concept of spectacle in relation to hip-hop CD covers and in turn produced their own spectacle CDS. The second example portrays how children built their interview skills by producing constructed interviews with musicians based on music sampling. Then, I conclude with implications for making pedagogical choices that include higher-order thinking skills in relationship to technology and literacy. All of this writing is offered as another pocket of hope for teachers and researchers to adapt and modify when working with children who may be on the destructive side of the digital divide.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGIES AND HIP-HOP CULTURE

Essential to this article is the notion of culturally responsive pedagogy—pedagogies that use cultures and lived experiences to enhance, support, and further learning processes (Gay, 2000). Researchers from multicultural, feminist, and/or critical perspectives push for teachers and school officials to embrace these pedagogies that promote academic success for all students in an increasingly diverse society (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In so doing, they argue against solely theorizing and implementing culturally responsive pedagogies with an exclusive focus on race and ethnicity (Norton, 2005; Norton & Bentley, 2006). Instead, they define culture in a more expansive way that includes but is not limited to total ways of being around sexuality, dress, race, class, age,

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ethnicity, citizenship, ability, spirituality, and gender (De Gaetano, Williams, & Volk, 1998).

Recently, hip-hop has been reconceptualized as a culture able to join the non-exhaustive previous list. Like all other cultures, hip-hop provides tools, values, practices, and artifacts in the form of its five common elements that shape communicative practices (Chang, 2005). Through the music, DJing, MCing, clothes, dance, graffiti, and movement, hip-hop has shaped the way many people see and experience the world (Pough, 2004).Attending to hip-hop as an aspect of culture is significant because the globalization of hip-hop has increasingly shaped entire generations of people despite differences in age, race, class, language, gender, and education (Brown, 2006; Scherpf, 2001). For these generations of people, the culture of hip-hop provides communicative practices whereby members can converse about societal oppressions, disenfranchisement, daily realities, and environmental conditions (Fenn & Perullo, 2000; Forman & Neal, 2004). Like any other culture, hip-hop gives space for its members to form community specific dialogic practices and discourses (Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003).

Yet, despite the magnitude of hip-hop's impact on people, the knowledges, diverse literacies, depth, and sustenance within the culture continually remain invisible, or discarded (Dyson, 2004; Price, 2005). Invisible for many educators are the ways in which they may align hip-hop literacies practices with mainstream literacies practices that are valued in educational institutions (Cooks, 2004; Mahiri, 1996). Building from the notion of hip-hop as culture and not solely music, my writing offers educators and researchers the space to concern ourselves with children's enjoyment of the music as well as the potential of hip-hop to support children's reading, writing, speaking, technology

skills, and creation of diverse texts. Thus, hip-hop literacies practices within this article are situated as literacies practices where youth and children read and write hip-hop based texts, encode and decode meaning, compare and contrast life experiences, formulate arguments, create audio, visual, and gestural texts, while expressing and negotiating their cultures and the world in which they live (Norton, 2006; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002).

HIP-HOP LITERACIES PRACTICES

There is an expanding cadre of researchers and educators who are exploring how hip-hop literacies practices are implemented inside and outside of educational institutions (Christen, 2003; Pardue, 2004). For example, Crossley's (2005) work *Metaphorical Conceptions in Hip-Hop Music* helps to align hip-hop literacies practices with literacy standards and mainstream school literacy practices. Throughout his work he details how rap embodies metaphors and metaphorical traits including signifying, irony, satire, similes, and figurative language. He argues that studying the metaphorical concepts within hip-hop culture is a venue for shedding light on the knowledges, experiences, and activities of those who participate in hip-hop. His work explores how metaphors permit people to express thoughts and meanings too difficult to express literally. He posits that metaphors provide a venue for expressive vivid language through compact communication. Crossley notes that metaphors are ascribed community-specific language and understandings. Therefore, they have immense abilities to serve as a catalyst for new understandings of collective experiences and to create new realities.

Like Crossley (2005) Bruce and Davis (2000) contend that hip-hop is full of metaphorical content. By focusing on metaphors and other literary content, they articulate

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examples of incorporating hip-hop into school curriculum. They contend that infusing hip-hop, rap in particular, into the English curriculum validates culturally specific languages, develops school literacies, and aligns hip-hop's elements with the skills that English teachers must cover. Specifically, they illustrate how rhyme, repetition, mimesis, ruptures, and flow are equivalent to poetic tropes and devices such as rhyming couplets, similes, metaphors, and alliteration. Bruce and Davis also focus on creating successful poetry slams for children to participate in. They believe that such teaching is a strategy to "intervene in the structural and systemic violence that has marginalized the knowledges that they bring with them to the classrooms. A Hip-Hop oriented pedagogy seeks first of all to reconstitute as subjects those who have been treated as objects" (p.122). Such work that focuses on creating equity and bringing marginalized knowledges to the center of curriculum shares similar goals and philosophies with scholars who explicitly name culturally responsive pedagogy as the foundation for their work (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Similar positions are taken by other educators who align hip-hop with school literacies in order to contest the tendency to locate youth who enact hip-hop practices on the outskirts of academic discourses. For example, Cooks (2004) focuses on including rap as a genre in which students can write and respond to literature. Further, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) offer us multiple possibilities for such work. In articulating the significance of hip-hop as a pedagogical site, they call for critical pedagogues who provide learning opportunities for youth to use hip-hop texts as springboards to interpret the messages in the music and for social action as well as to analyze themes, motifs, character traits, and plots. They integrate an English poetry unit with hip-hop and focus

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on historical and literary periods that include the Civil War, the Elizabethan Age and the post-Industrial Revolution era (Morrell, 2002; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). Students worked in groups and were asked to analyze the links between a poem and rap song that related to their particular historical and literary period. Additionally, students were required to individually gather an anthology of poems and to write a critical essay on their song. Their pedagogical strategies successfully incorporate hip-hop into the literacy and Social Studies curriculum.

The trend and contributions of these educators and researchers who align hip-hop with school literacy rest in incorporating hip-hop into classrooms by focusing on rap and print, mainly by linking lyrics to poetry. This theorizing and teaching of rap as hip-hop's most visible signifier is possible because songs and song lyrics are more easily commodified than other aspects of hip-hop (Dimitriadis, 2001). When I first began bringing hip-hop in the classroom, this too was my focus. While this offers tremendous opportunities for educators, it ignores the multiple literacies practices that exist in hip-hop and people's lives. Having come to this realization over the last few years, I continue to link rap to poetry and focus on print, but I also create hip-hop literacy learning by drawing on multiple literacies practices that include print, oral, gesture, and visual texts in the forms of art, clothing, dance, music, and lyrics. Seeking to expand culturally responsive pedagogy and articulate effective and socially just technology and literacy pedagogies, the remainder of this article highlights the multiple intersecting dimensions of hip-hop, literacies, and technology.

Aligning Hip-Hop, Multiple Literacies, School, and Spectacle CDs

Pedagogical Decisions and Strategies for the Spectacle CD

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Educators seeking to implement effective pedagogical strategies that build technology and literacy skills for children who are negatively impacted by the digital divide may choose to begin in a way that focuses on creating the conditions of teaching and learning (Nieto, 2004). Selecting a major focus and a grounding theme for children that will inspire them to want to strengthen both their technology and literacies abilities is of the utmost importance. Although there are a range of possibilities, the most effective content for this learning environment will be one that speaks directly to your children's interests and cultures. In my context, many of the urban ethnic minority children that I was teaching were part of the hip-hop culture and identified themselves in relation to the culture. Therefore, I chose music as the crux of our activity.

Further, it was important to me to draw on their visual literacy strengths at the same time that I was introducing them to new technology knowledge. Like other urban children they had demonstrated great ability to relate visual images to one another, to process images, and to encode meaning from a range of visual images (Beilke & Stuve, 2004). Through our interactions they displayed capabilities of understanding, questioning, and critiquing visual representations within the media (Semali, 2003). Like others, I believed in the possibilities of technology to enhance music knowledge as well as music to augment technological abilities (Ho, 2007; Knight et al, 2004). In light of these pedagogical considerations, I narrowed the focus of this activity to illuminate the purposeful choices that hip-hop artists, producers, and public relations managers make in selecting and creating the images on CD covers. It was my contention that providing the space for children to read CD covers, discuss these images, and make meaning of the decision processes aligned with the necessary critical and visual literacies that

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deconstruct and construct messages and representations in cultural images (Beilke & Stuve, 2004; Vasquez, 2004).

It was from these pedagogical conditions that the Spectacle CD activity arose. This activity began with children examining 20 CD covers and discussing initial thoughts that came to mind. Children ages seven to 12 shared initial thoughts and articulated patterns and themes they saw across the images. For example, one child said, "In a lot of these they have crosses or symbols that look like they are praying." Another commented, " A lot of these also have guns. " "Some of these have people's pictures and some have cartoons." Children made text-to-self connections including, "I like this look at their clothes." And "Look at the baby. Don't you think he's so cute?" Children also made text-to-world connections: "Look here it is like slavery times," and "These have lots of people thinking, like so many things to think about in the world."

This initial conversation about the visual images on the CD covers was built upon by linking it with the definition of spectacle. In sharing the following definition, " A spectacle is something extraordinary that people look at. It is like something that would make people stop and stare or go 'oh wow look at that,'" I sought to deepen the conversations for the children. Pedagogically I sought to draw on higher-order thinking skills by giving them an additional lens, the spectacle lens, with which to view the CD covers. I elaborated further with the intention of having the children create more developed schema and lens that would enable them to have new insights when they re-examined the CD covers.

> Sometimes spectacles can be good, bad, unfamiliar, or just very different. A spectacle can be like something you are amazed at or never seen before or can

> hardly believe that you see. A spectacle can be a show – like the circus or a concert. A spectacle can be something you see like a mural or parade or when people perform on the street. A spectacle can be something that is also embarrassing. Like people say don't make a spectacle of yourself, like a kid throwing a tantrum, people fighting on the street, or kids acting the fool.

I utilized analogous strategies to introduce other key words such as *sphere*, *marginalized*, *exclusionary*, and *historical* that would be necessary for children to comprehend the print text they would receive. For example, I explained that "*marginalized* and *exclusionary* were very similar— like when people treat other people bad and leave them out, ignore them, or treat them different." I provided them with examples:

> *Exclusionary* is when people leave you out of a game, don't invite you to a party, or tell you that you can't be part of their friend group. *Marginalized* is like the same. When people make fun of you, tease you, don't want you to be in their group. Or like when White people treat brown people bad, don't want them in their neighborhood. Or when people follow you around the store like you are going to steal something.

Such pedagogical decisions demonstrated the high expectations that I had for all children involved. I exhibited a belief that each child at the table could read complicated images because they were of personal interest. By passing along information and culturally responsive examples and definitions of *exclusionary* and *spectacle*, I presented the children with a sense that I valued their abilities to think deeply and to understand complex topics. I wanted to create space and structures that required and expected them

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to analyze, articulate meaning beyond surface level, and to relate our discussion to their everyday realities.

Next I provided students with the following quotations taken from Pough's (2004) book entitled *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*:

> Rap music and Hip-Hop culture provide a spectacle . . . by making creative use of spectacle.
>
> Rappers with their bold use of language and dress, also use their image and spectacle as their initial entry into the public sphere. In this instance, spectacle functions dually as both style and a plea to be heard, to be allowed to represent.
>
> The show, the spectacle, is the first step toward change- the first part of getting heard.
>
> For a historically marginalized and invisible group, the spectacle is what allows them a point of entry into a public space that has proven to be violent and exclusionary.

In presenting these quotations, I deliberately chose a professional and political pedagogical act that represented urban ethnic minority children as capable of higher-order thinking and intense engagement. My intention was to support and extend the literacies of the children that required them to read, analyze, and evaluate a range of visual media images (Semali, 2004). In response to my expectations and the context that I created, the children demonstrated that they were able to engage in lively and intense discussion about what these quotations meant and how this related to hip-hop. Here is a snippet of that conversation:

> Eli: Like when people create videos and they are all showy and fancy with stuff like cars, jewelry, and pools.
>
> Iesha: Yea and when girls be having no clothes on shaking their butts on the video. Like people make themselves look so bad sometimes.

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Eli: Or when they have concerts and a whole bunch of people come on stage and they drive their cars on stage. They have on all these clothes, and sometimes bring all that stuff on stage.

Iesha: Yeah and sometimes when people fight at the concerts.

Upon hearing children question and make meaning about what hip-hop images they hear and see, I knew they were capable of being both critical viewers and entertained viewers (Taylor, 2006). They were aware of the messages inherent in the visual images that were part of their hip-hop culture. Their conversation would mark them as having a high level of media literacy – abilities to critically analyze, create, consume, and participate in media (Semali, 2003)

Based on these strengths, I chose to deepen their knowledge even further by helping them to understand that all spectacles are not bad. I redirected the children to go back and re-examine the CD covers and to specifically discuss these images, keeping mind their connections to these quotations and the meanings that we discussed. Children were asked to look at the details on the CD covers and to pay attention to the outside and inside flaps on the CD covers. They were then required to name specific CD covers and specific images that related to the particular words and quotations.

Nadjwa: Pick one of the images and tell us why you would think this was a spectacle.

Dion: On this Game CD, look at this picture with his fists up and his angry face. People would stop and look because he was mad at something. He looks angry ready to fight.

Iesha: On this Nas one he is praying and getting power from God.

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Eli: He looks like he is drawing power from all the buildings behind him and the whole city.

Brittany: This one makes you stop and think of slavery. The White people chasing the Black people.

Iesha: Yeah because the White people don't want the Black people around. That always used to happen like when Martin Luther King was around.

Nadjwa: Yes, this is a picture not from slavery but what they used to call Jim Crow times. The Jim Crow law separated Whites from Blacks.

Throughout these analyses I realized that children of all ages demonstrated higher-order thinking capabilities. Eli, age nine, was one of the most verbal children in the group. When he contributed to the conversation, he offered nuanced details and meaning-making that drew from all of the smaller images within the overall CD cover. He never once repeated what other people said, and he often focused on the CD covers that required more in-depth postulating. In a similar vein, eight-year-old Iesha spoke very passionately and added depth to 11-year-old Brittany's comment about a CD cover on which White police officers were hosing down Blacks. She was more accurately able to place the CD into its accurate historical time of the Civil Rights era and constitute the behavior as a long-term occurrence since slavery.

It was at this point that I knew the children were invested enough in thinking about the spectacle topic in relation to hip-hop CD covers. Pedagogically speaking, it was now time to incorporate technology as a tool to enhance the literacies and to build upon the foundational knowledge that the children readily displayed. Children were now required to create their own spectacle CD covers utilizing PowerPoint. In making this

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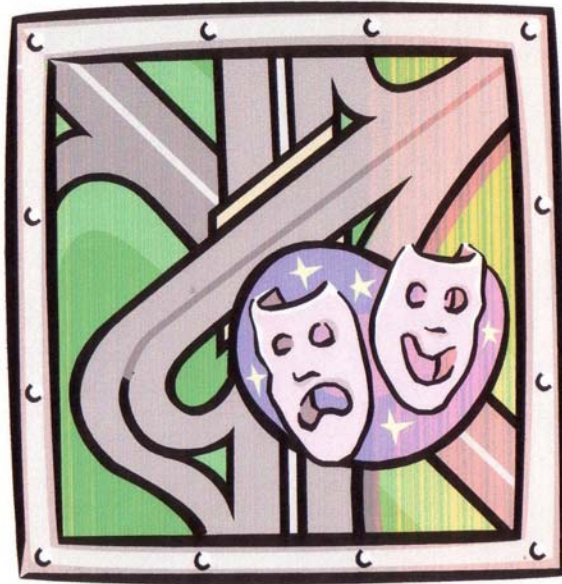
decision I believed that children could use their technology skills to further understanding about music content, maintain high interest and motivation, and allow educational technology to have positive effects on their learning and motivation (Ho, 2007).

Since most of the children did not have prior knowledge of PowerPoint, I sought to give them technology knowledge that would decrease the digital divide. PowerPoint is a well-known program used in many schools and workplaces to both receive and impart information. I wanted these urban ethnic minority children to be familiar with mainstream technology capital that would help them both in the present and future. In order to teach the technology, I did a demo lesson that focused on creating one PowerPoint slide and not an entire show. I included instructions and pointers about choosing and incorporating clip art pictures, searching with key words, including print text, resizing images, and moving images.

These pedagogical decisions were particularly important in light of the fact that we were operating in some of the restrictive conditions that maintain the digital divide. For example, I was working with about 15 students, and we had access to five computers, only one of which had online access. Due to the limited resources, including sparse clip art and crowded sharing conditions, I might have chosen not to engage this activity and to have children play a game. However, due to equity pedagogy and the need to supply children with technology access, I chose otherwise. Children huddled together sharing computers waiting for me to provide them step-by-step oral directions because we did not have the visual support of a Smartboard. They took turns trying out each of the directions that I voiced and worked diligently with a very unfriendly set of clip art images that did not readily lend themselves to hip-hop visual representations and culture.

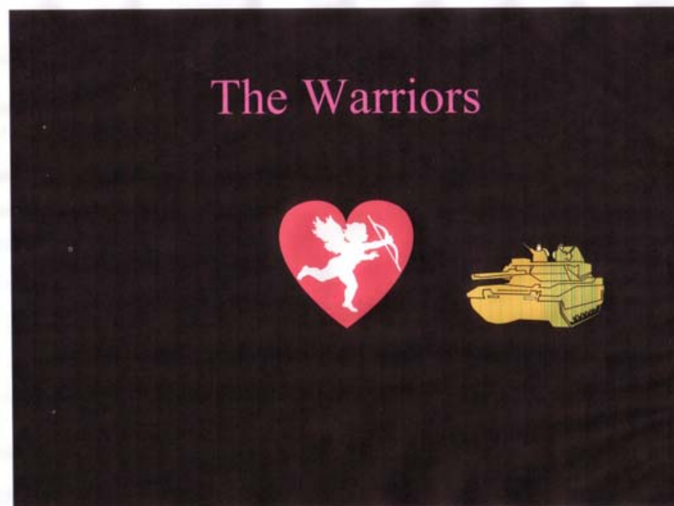
The children diligently worked to incorporate their literacies and technology skills in order to produce their Spectacle CDs. They visibly displayed attentiveness and eagerness as they manipulated the PowerPoint tools. Children sat in pairs and typed in key words such as *life*, *rap*, *music*, *dance*, *microphone*, and *video* in order to find the images that they desired. In most cases children had an idea of the images that they were looking for. With this focus in mind they demonstrated literacies that require students to monitor their use of visual texts and languages to effectively communicate with people for a range of reasons (http://www.ira.org, Standard Four). All the children were clearly aware that they were producing these CDs for particular purposes and with the intent to communicate understanding of the concept of spectacle. Sometimes frustration arose when the key word did not bring up the image that they desired. I explained to children how limited clip art was and also how the range of images was going to be different for the children depending on whether or not their computer had online access.

The children's CD covers represent their abilities to search for and find visual images that represent an understanding of spectacle – something that would make somebody stop and take a closer look at the CD cover. The first example demonstrates the way Kassidy, a 10-year-old girl, was able to combine three separate images and create a CD cover. She titled her CD cover "Sad Face Film" and demonstrated a remarkable ability to place the masquerade masks on a large complex road while angling the camera in a direction that captures the interactions of life.



Her work required that she move, resize, and overlay images upon one another. She also chose not to add any print text to her CD cover but only to save this file with the chosen name.

Kaili, a nine-year-old girl, also demonstrated abilities to select, resize, and reposition images in order to make her CD. She chose two striking clip art images and interfaced them against one another, illustrating her understanding of a spectacle as well.



She also included print text on her CD by labeling the CD with the title, "The Warriors." Kaili was interested in providing additional color to her CD cover and asked me additional questions. In order to further her technology skills, I conferred with her individually and taught her how to change the font color and to add background color. She was very excited about finding certain colors and changing how the words looked.

The children demonstrated that they have reached benchmarks that require students to "participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities" (http://www.ira.org, Standard 11). It is clear from reading both these CD covers that they have grasped how to create images that make people stop and think. The individual images of a road, mask, camera, love, and war all speak to recurring themes and content within hip-hop songs and videos. In addition to illustrating their hip-hop knowledges, reflectivity, and creativity, they displayed how they situated themselves as helpful members of their literacy and technology communities. For example, once I showed Kaili how to change the font, font color, and background, she in turn taught four other children these skills. My fieldnotes indicate her helpfulness and the accuracy with which she transferred knowledge. Moreover, Kaili was not the only child who demonstrated effort to share knowledge with others:

> Iesha turns and asks Kaili how she got that background color. Kaili tells her what to go and do. Kaili also shows Eli how to change the font on his sports CD. They are really helping each other. They don't even seem to mind having to stop their

> own creations to help one another. Seven-year-old Chris asks eight-year-old Iesha for help with how to spell a key word she spells it for him. It doesn't show what he wants and he asks her for more help. She gives him another word that doesn't work. Finally, she goes and types another word for him. A few minutes later he wants help thinking of something else for his "Things That Matter" CD and she helps again.

Both Standards 11 and four were incorporated by a vast majority of the students. Moreover, throughout the course of this session five out of 15 students took on the role of helpers and teachers, where they willingly, frequently paused their own work in order to help other children. Dion, an 11-year-old boy who taught others how to animate their images, represents another example of this ability to help others and to transfer knowledge. When I visited Dion to check in on his work, I was awestruck because he was one of the quietest people in the group discussion yet I could see how he had absorbed so much of the information. His CD was labeled "Angry" and illustrated conscious choices tot demonstrate emotion and everyday concepts of anger that would make anyone stop and take notice.

While talking with him and his good friend nine-year-old Eli, who was working at the adjacent computer, I decided to show them both how to animate pictures. We went through a few techniques and tools for animation including experimenting with timing, flying, wheeling, checkering, and fading. I then left them alone to experiment with the animation tools. Here are some of the fieldnotes that document their explorations:

> Eli says "ooh ooh look at what this does." Dion looks at Eli's computer and then returns back to his computer and tries something. Dion calls me over to look at his computer. I go over and learn new animation technique that I didn't know before.

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> I return to other groups. They keep calling me over and screaming in excitement. I hear them back and forth showing each other some new feature that they have just explored. I tell them that I can't keep coming over. I tell them work more and then I will come over in 10 minutes. They even share some of their animation techniques with Iesha who is sitting nearby.

It is apparent that Dion and Eli as well as some of the other children involved in this Spectacle CD project have gained technology skills and confidence with technology in a manner that permits them to share information with each other. Their actions continue to chip away at the digital divide that makes it impossible for many young urban ethnic minority children to become familiar with PowerPoint. Moreover, they were so motivated by their knowledge they shared techniques, strategies, and possibilities with other children in the room. In numerous ways their motivation and engagement with the technology as well as the creation of the spectacle CD made it possible for them to manipulate spoken, written, and visual communication for advancement, pleasure, persuasion, and information exchange (http://www.ira.org, Standard 12). Throughout the work session, children could be heard laughing, talking, and sharing information. Dion and Eli eventually began calling over other students, counselors, and adults who would enter the computer room when they could not maintain my attention. Eventually, children from our group and others in the room were very impressed with their computer abilities and immediately wanted to learn how to either add animation or begin the project.

In many ways the success of this lesson resulted from incorporating pedagogical strategies evidenced in the literature. Primarily, it was the pedagogical foundation that

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placed hip-hop culture and knowledges at the center of the lesson that gained children's initial interest. By presenting visual images in the form of CD covers, children were able to uptake serious discussion, draw on their strengths, offer perspectives, and critique representations of their culture. The degree to which children were able to further and deepen their knowledge made it possible to sustain these children's interest over time. Consequently, by the time that I introduced the technology, it was an integrated pedagogical component rather than an add-on and it served as a means to an end (Smith, 2002).

HIP-HOP SAMPLING INTERVIEWS

The hip-hop sampling interviews are the second example of a lesson that is embedded within pedagogical practices that interconnect higher-order thinking skills, technology, literacy, and hip-hop. In this lesson, I sought to draw on technology skills and practices that were a part of each child's daily routine: listening to music. Like other scholars I wanted to create the conditions of teaching and learning that bridged home school practices and school and vernacular literacies practices (Li, 2006; Williams, 2005). Seeking to develop higher-order skills by building an understanding of the interview genre, developing the skills of creating humorous texts, and working on integrating technology into original texts, I introduced the hip-hop sampling interview. Specifically, we were going to create a humorous mock interview with a famous person around some incident that was in the media by including music sampling from songs as well as the students' voices. The technology skills that I sought to incorporate here relied on searching the computer, editing music, and creating a product via a tape recorder.

The lesson began by asking some of the following questions that tapped into students' prior knowledge about interviewing. What is an interview? What kinds of interviews are there? Where are places that we can see, listen to, or watch interviews? Have you participated in, seen, read, watched, or listened to an interview? We then discussed characteristics and purposes of different types of interviewing. In making this pedagogical choice, I wanted children to see the importance of interviews, understand the range of purposes interviews may serve, and consider the plethora of contexts in which interviews may occur. I wanted them to draw on their prior knowledge of interviews that were evident in their cultures and their hip-hop cultures. In setting the contexts with these questions, children offered responses that related directly to them, family members, and representations in the media.

After this discussion, I shared an example of this genre by Chris Rock, where he does a feigned interview with O.J. Simpson and interposes his answers with sampling from hip-hop songs. The mentor text was a 3:37 minute interview titled *Press Conference*. The interviewer for this text is female, and she asks questions such as "O.J., why did you run?" The sampling answer is "Murder was the case they gave me." The reporter then asks, "What about Nicole? Do you still think about Nicole?" The reply is from a LL Cool J song: "When I'm alone in my room sometimes I stare at the wall and in the back of mind I hear my conscience call." She ends the interview with "Do you have any last words?," and the sampling response is from Bone Thugs and Harmony: "See you at the crossroads so you won't be lonely. See you at the crossroads so you won't be lonely."

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The next pedagogical decisions included helping children explore the technology and literacy strategies that Chris Rock used to make his interview successful. In particular my pedagogical rationale sought to highlight children's abilities to use intertextual strategies and to incorporate media images in their own creations (Dyson, 1997). Further, I believed that children's products would be strengthened as they actively incorporated media and particular discursive elements that caught their interests (Dyson, 2001). Therefore, after listening to the mentor text I asked, "What made this interview different from the other interviews that we discussed previously?" The students immediately talked about the humor and the music sampling. I then asked, "What makes something funny? What strategies did Chris Rock use to make this funny?" We discussed the strategies used to create such texts and covered aspects of perspective taking, figurative language, popular culture knowledge, music sampling, lyric sampling, focusing the interview, humor, and finding concrete evidence to draw answers from. I noted that this interview wouldn't be funny if Chris Rock hadn't picked somebody who was very popular in the media.

Children continued to draw on multiple literacies and evidenced capabilities to draw on prior experience and to interact with other creators of texts (http://www.ira.org, Standard Three). Their ability to comprehensively participate in these literacies practices were visible when I tapped into students' prior knowledge of popular culture and famous people in the world. They were easily able to come up with celebrities who were the focus of gossip or exposure in the media. Most of them had extensive prior knowledge in terms of burning, locating, and downloading music. Because of

these knowledges that they brought with them, they were all confident about producing their own original texts.

The students were eager to start their own mock interviews, but before we began, I taught them about open-ended questions and the difference between an open-ended question and a closed–ended question. We brainstormed a list of words and phrases that ensure open-ended questions. These included "how," "why," "in what ways," "when," and "can you explain." Next, I shared with them that if the goal of an interview is to receive detailed information and more than two-word answers, they might engage this conversation not only with questions but also with statements. The following were suggested starters: "tell me a story about," "describe a time when," and "explain what you."

The students were then given the option of working individually or in pairs to brainstorm a list of people that they might want to interview and the focus of that interview. In these same formations they wrote questions and answers that came from sampling lines of songs. Most people worked in pairs and served as resources for each other to recall lines of songs, make questions funnier, and articulate interview questions. While they were working, I circled the room visiting the formations for brief periods, providing feedback and serving as a resource to strengthen their productions. In cultivating a learning environment that valued their prior knowledge and hip-hop cultures, I was able to work as a facilitator extending their genre knowledge concerning interviews.

In addition to helping them understand how to create successful interview questions in the whole group, I worked with them through conferring and feedback

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around the flow of an interview. I showed them how to order and organize interview questions that gave coherence to the interview. I explained the necessity of creating interviews that supported the interviewee in moving from easier to more difficult questions. I also informed them about how important it was to group questions around lines of thinking so that the interviewee would not feel like a ping pong ball being tossed around back and forth from one idea to the next and back to an earlier idea. Students were then asked to incorporate my feedback when revising their first drafts of these hip-hop sampling interviews. Through this curricular activity, I explicitly taught them how to build literacies practices concerned with implementing a range of strategies that help them communicate with an audience (http://www.ira.org, Standard Five). To that end, I taught them about interview questions and the purpose of an interview.

During this component children's minimal technology skills were visible as only a few children needed to search the Internet for specific song lyrics. In most cases, using this technology was unnecessary because the children knew the words to songs very well. Since students were easily able to draw on their knowledge of hip-hop culture, they merely had to recall the song lyrics and incorporate them into their writing. By drawing on their strengths, we completed the written part of the project in two days. Throughout the entire process the children demonstrated high capabilities of evaluating, analyzing, comprehending, and interpreting texts (http://www.ira.org, Standard Three). Everyone thought the O.J. interview was funny and discussed Chris Rock's choice of songs to sample. People gave suggestions for other songs that Chris Rock could have used to sample for answers. Additionally, most were easily able to identify songs and lines from songs that they wanted to sample for the answers to their own interview questions. In

accomplishing this part of the project where they wrote their questions and selected their answers, they exhibited the ability to apply knowledge of media, language, and genre (http://www.ira.org, Standard Six). The power of this project as well as the engagement and creative processes that students demonstrated were at an advanced level because the children already brought with them a particular motivation, engagement with music, and knowledge of music.

However, technology use was essential in the next component of developing the hip-hop sampling interview. Once the children finished composing their written interviews, their next step was to find CDs or burn the songs that they needed that contained the sampled answers. We brainstormed how people might acquire the songs that needed to be sampled. People suggested bringing in their CDs and tapes, borrowing CDs and tapes, and burning music from the computer. This incorporation of technology entailed that they use diverse skills in order to tap into a range of resources including the Internet, MP3 players, and other people. Once we identified these resources, they brought them to class, where I had three tape recorders. The students then used these recorders to create their sampled interviews. In some cases when neither students nor I could locate the song, they chose to sing the line or to replace it with another sample.

During the final phase of the project their engagement allowed me to suggest tips about how to search and acquire resources in an effort to strengthen their literacies practices in synthesizing technological and informational resources (http://www.ira.org, Standard Eight). Students were then asked to gather the resources for homework and be prepared for our next session to create the audio sampled version. Throughout the next session, I made pedagogical choices to extend their knowledge concerning editing and

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integrating information. I provided them with the tape recorders as resources and helped them to create the final audio version that included their voices asking the questions and the sampled music as responses to the questions. While they were taping, we discussed the choices that they were making about the exact music and words that they wanted to include for their sampling responses. We talked about different options and the strengths and weaknesses for the choices before students made their final choices. In some cases, the students changed what they originally wrote on the paper because listening to the music gave them a stronger line to choose. In other cases, the students had to make choices, which focused on the music as well as the lyric response. For example, in many songs lines were repeated within and across different beats, pronunciations, and tempos. All of these musical choices influenced the different ways that lyrics would be presented and responded to by the listener.

As this hip-hop sampling interview began to wind down, I contemplated the manner in which the completed projects would have been different if these children were not on the deficit end of the digital divide. Despite an enjoyable and successful project where children successfully combined literacy and technology skills to produce their own hip-hop sample interviews, the lack of access to technology was ever present. For example, had our center been endowed with computers with editing equipment, recording equipment, a music expert, and/or a technology consultant, the children would have been exposed to greater technology access and would most likely have acquired other skills. Even against these limitations, 11-year-old Toya worked individually and chose to interview Michael Jackson.

In reflecting on her experience she states,

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> When we listened to the interview it gave us the idea of what we were supposed to do. First I thought of a controversial incident. Then I came up with Michael Jackson. I was looking for an edge but also something that could be a comedy, very humorous.

Toya quickly found the subject of her interview and then produced the following interview:

> Reporter: What is the statement that you made to the boy's mother that accused you of molestation?
>
> Michael Jackson: (music sampling-Michael Jackson) Just beat it beat it
>
> Reporter: What about your affair with Billie Jean?
>
> Michael Jackson: (music sampling- Michael Jackson) Billie Jean is not my lover she's just a girl who thinks that I am the one. But the kid is not my son.
>
> Reporter: Where did you and your ex wife meet?
>
> Michael Jackson: (music sampling-Nelly) in da crib
>
> Reporter: Would you rather molest boys than girls?
>
> Michael Jackson: (music sampling-Lil John) oh yeah yeah
>
> Reporter: How do you feel about the incident with Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake?
>
> Michael Jackson: (music sampling-NA) I don't know
>
> Reporter: Is there any fire between you and your ex-wife?
>
> Michael Jackson: (music sampling-Usher) let it burn
>
> Reporter: Is there anything else that we need to know about any other boys?

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Michael Jackson: (music sampling-Usher) If I'm going to tell it then I got to tell it all.

Reporter: What would you like me to say to any other reporters if they ask me about you?

Michael Jackson: (music sampling-Alicia Keys) You don't know my name.

The final creation of the audio text was completed a week later once we were able to acquire all the necessary samples. In successfully creating this sampling interview of Michael Jackson, Toya drew on her love for hip-hop and other genres of music and unearthed her ability to integrate many diverse literacy practices. I was privileged enough to have her accompany me as a co-presenter for a social service conference where she also shared her sampled interview.

PARTING THOUGHTS

To this point I have demonstrated how I implemented culturally responsive pedagogies in two curricular activities that integrated hip-hop culture, higher-order thinking, technology, and literacies. I sought to provide insight for educators and researchers seeking to lessen the digital divide and to strengthen the literacies practices of children. I present this article as another pocket of hope, a tool for educators and researchers to call upon when they are re-envisioning the possibilities of creating learning environments for children. In so doing, I also acknowledge the current state of social and political contexts of our schools but contend that it is more than possible to negotiate our mandates and to tap into children's cultures and interests. To that end, it is my intention that all of these literacies and technologies are

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used to mutually inform each other, rather than in a manner that sets out to allow the dominant school literacies to co-opt or appropriate hip-hop literacy practices.

It is my hope that after reading this article that you have received some concrete teaching strategies and practices that serve to help you augment how you combine literacies and technology in your teaching and increase student engagement by incorporating popular culture music. Even though I focused on hip-hop as culture and the content, you may use other genres of music or music in general. The specific genre of music that you choose and the specific activities that you choose are important, for, in order to be culturally responsive, they need to be aligned with the cultures, practices, and identities of the children that you serve. However, those are not the most significant implications of this article.

By illustrating what is possible through the use of hip-hop, the greatest implication that I offer is about constructing a pedagogical schema for you to build culturally responsive pedagogies that can be used with any other culture that will chip away at the digital divide and the literacies gap. Regardless of the music genre that one selects, it is imperative that educators understand that this pedagogical schema has multiple components. Although these components are inextricably linked, iterative, and non-linear, I will try to separate them with no distinction in importance or order. 1) Before planning any curriculum, you must understand the culturally responsive literacies practices and technology skills that are being drawn upon. This pedagogical strategy might require you to experience the music, experiment with technology, do research, and gather resources. 2) You must identify the dominant school literacies or knowledges that are inherent in these practices. In order to do this you must become

more familiar with the genre that you choose. Dissect it, immerse yourself in it, see how it is relevant to what you learned in your teaching preparation or what you have been asked to cover in terms of academic content. Jot down the definitions and components of literacy and technology. Decide what aspects of this genre fit into these broad definitions.

Once you can identify general connections between the dominant school literacies and the cultures, map these literacies and technologies onto the standards. This necessitates keeping abreast of your standards, pacing calendars, and school mandates. You will have to be detailed and careful when making lesson plans. You will need to be able to articulate your pedagogical rationale to yourself, students, administrators, and family members. In this way we acknowledge the political contexts in which our students and we teach and learn while valuing the culturally diverse literacies and technologies as well as the dominant literacies/knowledges. Remember to collaborate with other colleagues. This collaboration will provide you more support, energy, creative ideas, and access to resources and skills that you might not possess. Additionally, working with other educators might enable you to extend your projects across curriculum content areas, thereby deepening children's learning experiences, integrating the curriculum, and allowing you to take whatever you are teaching to a more intensive level. Moreover, working with others will provide you with allies in the event that you are one of the few people trying to implement such teaching against the rigid constraints of political teaching content. The increased number of teachers creates more power to actually implement this desired teaching. In combining all of these implications and pedagogical strategies, you are now more

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prepared to tap into your children's strengths via higher-order thinking skills in order to strengthen the necessary literacies and technologies. You have moved one step further in diminishing the educational divide facing so many of our children.

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