Scratching beyond the Surface: Hip Hop and Its Art of Persuasion

Samuel A. Reed, III
D. Beeber Middle School

Abstract

This unit draws upon media literacy, social studies, and traditional literacy practices to explore hip-hop and its art of persuasion. This unit is intended to integrate across the core curriculum for middle school (6th-8th grade) students. Persuasive writing will serve as anchor skill for students to master during this unit. To accomplish this goal, students will study the intersection of the art of persuasion with the art of hip-hop to understand how hip-hop artists mediate the tensions between commercial and community interests. As students explore hip-hop’s persuasive techniques and its underlying economic modalities, they should improve their reading, writing and critical thinking skills. In this curriculum unit students will conduct original inquiry on persuasion and how it operates in their hip-hop world view. The objectives, strategies and lessons described in this curriculum employ non-print media from hip-hop lyrics, fashion, and other media art forms. As a culminating activity, students will create or select rap lyrics and produce multi-media public service announcements (PSAs) to practice elements of persuasion using hip hop-inspired images, sounds, and other art forms. By creating their own persuasive digital stories students will synthesize what they learned about hip-hop and the art of persuasion.