This study analyzed the learning outcomes of a Black male kindergarten-first grade teacher’s usage of Hip Hop as an instructional approach using autoethnography as a method. The primary research question that guided this work was, “What can I learn from an examination of the experiences of Black male kindergarten/first grade teacher and students from a retroactive examination of the use of Hip Hop Pedagogy in a kindergarten/first grade classroom of African American children? Data sources for this study included of artifacts (electronic classroom portfolios, videos of classroom instruction, archived teaching evaluations, parents’ e-mails, student assessments, correspondence from administrators, lesson plans and reflective notes) amassed over the course of one full year (including summer school). Data were analyzed using open and thematic coding. Major themes were then used to create three vignettes which captured the findings of the study. I triangulated data (Patton, 2002) to enhance the fidelity and trustworthiness of my study using two kinds of data: (1) personal memories/self-observational/self-reflective data and (2) external data (archived teaching evaluations, parents’ emails).

Findings showed that my conceptions of hip hop pedagogy evolved over the school year as I learned to position myself as a learner and to learn from students. I learned that I did not have to be the only person to perform hip hop and that students could lead the process, while also addressing learning outcomes of the curriculum. Culturally relevant pedagogical dimensions were evident in my use of hip hop pedagogy (e.g., conceptions of self and others, conceptions of knowledge, and social relations).

Although educators can extrapolate from the body of literature in secondary settings and make adaptations for preschool and elementary school children, this research addressed the need to study K-3 classrooms that use Hip Hop pedagogy by examining the effectiveness, barriers, challenges, and insufficiencies of strategies and processes used to integrate Hip Hop pedagogy in a K-1 classroom. The findings of the study may be useful for: (a) understanding how Hip Hop and rap are defined in the context of k-3 classroom settings; (b) further understanding the literacies that children already possess from their communities; (c) acquiring more knowledge about young children’s identities and its relationship to Hip Hop culture; (d) identifying the impact that Hip Hop culture (including mainstream aspects and music corporations) has on children that may emerge in the classroom; and (e) exploring the impact of teacher identity on instruction.