

Chemist Combines Hip Hop and Science

“

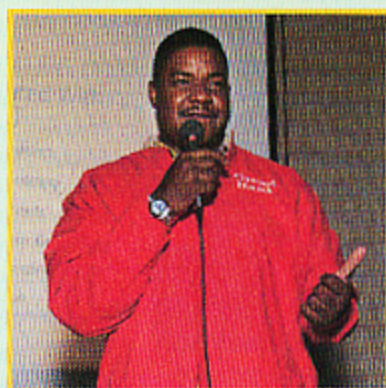
You have to meet students where they are, no matter where they are

”

Most people cannot envision how the combination of hip hop, science and a willingness to learn can lead to improved student achievement, but the education community's Grand Hank seems to have mastered the craft. Participants witnessed first hand his presentation entitled, *How to Turn Students on to Science Using Hip Hop Music and Hands-On Demonstrations*. Complete with a deejay, turntables and microphones, Grand Hank presented an entertaining mélange of scientific facts and demonstrations to a backdrop of Hip Hop music.

His real name is Tyraine Ragsdale, a product of the Philadelphia Public School System and a 1988 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in Chemistry. Prior to the formation of his own company, Grand Hank Productions, Inc.

(GHPI), Ragsdale was a research scientist for Johnson & Johnson's Pharmaceutical Research Institute Division working on a cure for AIDS. Presently, he serves as a consultant to numerous school districts from Connecticut to Florida, and various education organizations. He stars in his own science in the classroom television program, where he conducts science experiments, and produces other related publications in video and workbook form.



*Chemist Tyraine Ragsdale
a.k.a. Grand Hank in session*



Participant engaged in chemical experiment

Always filled to capacity, his sessions generated honest dialogue about how to reach students that seem unreachable and the best way to introduce new topics in science. "You have to meet students where they are, no matter where they are", said Grand Hank. He spoke about music being the great unifier, particularly for the current generation, and how to best use it for the benefit of teaching. He later introduced the word "chemiluminescence", the generation of electromagnetic radiation as light by the release of energy from a chemical reaction. Although many session participants had not heard of the word,

they were able to identify its meaning. Grand Hank then engaged in a series of classroom activities related to pronunciation, memory, definition, and explanation. Participants even learned a rap song about chemiluminescence: "luminescence, luminescence, chemiluminescence means light..." they rapped as the session ended. 2