

Students learn moves, motivation

By [JIMMY ISAAC](#)

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Nearly 400 student council members from 14 East Texas middle schools got a pep talk and learned some dance moves Wednesday.

Judson Middle School hosted the 2008 Northeast Texas Student Council Spring Forum. The event — which includes dances, motivation and the annual business meeting — is designed to inspire student council members to make good choices and steer clear of peer pressure, according to Henderson Middle School Student Council Sponsor Lori Vinson.



Kevin Green/News-Journal Photo

"Life will have its ups and downs, and transformations," said motivational speaker Patrick Perez after leading students through dances to pop songs such as "Walk it Out" and "Crank Dat." Perez is from El Paso, where he was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2006 by the El Paso Small Business Administration.

"There are these things that have us asking the question, 'Why?' We have all of these questions and none of the answers," Perez said. "The more that I go through life, the more I realize — one choice can change your entire life. One choice can change your entire future, starting right now.

The forum was paid for in part by the Texas Association of Student Councils, while Longview Independent School District sponsored the visit by Perez, who will speak to the student bodies at Judson, Forest Park and Foster middle schools, said Karen Caldwell, Judson's student council sponsor. The school district is paying Perez's \$3,000 fee with a federal drug-free schools grant, said school district spokesman Brian Bowman.

"We're all leaders from our schools, and it's really good to meet other people like you," said Cari Cunningham, an eighth-grader and vice president of Texarkana's Texas Middle School student council.

Ebony Jones, a Pine Tree ninth-grader, added, "I like meeting new people, and I like hearing the speaker. They give you good information about your life and their lives, and it gives you a chance to bond with your student council members."