

Pro break dancer inspires York Suburban students

A break-dancer told York Suburban students they had to work for their dreams.

By GREG GROSS

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Viante Barnes, center, and Maddie Firestone act out a skit during Patrick Perez's motivational speech Tuesday at York Suburban Middle School. 'Have the courage to believe in your dreams,' Perez told the students. (Daily Record/Sunday News - bil Bowden)

If you could do anything and wouldn't fail, what would you do?

That's the question Patrick Perez, a motivational speaker and Texas native, asked York Suburban Middle School students during an assembly Tuesday.

The students shouted back a plethora of answers.

A professional horseback rider.

A billionaire.

An Olympic volleyball player.

An emergency-room nurse.

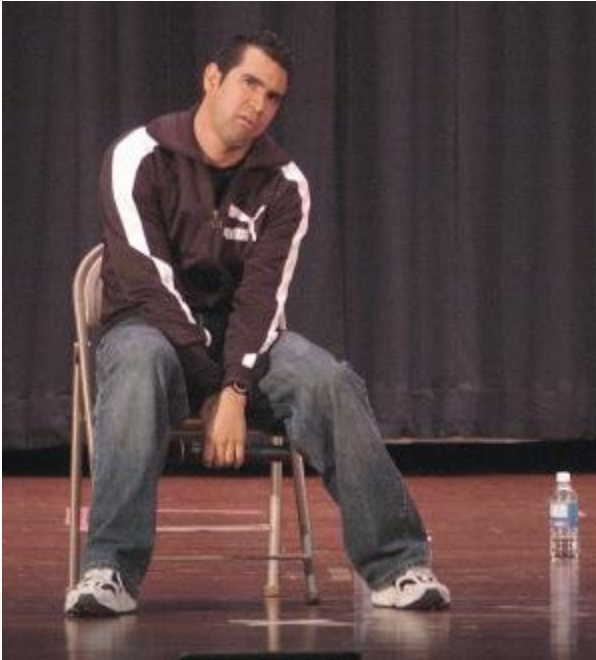
A cheerleader.

"It's not gonna happen," Perez said.

That's something most, if not all, of the students could hear from friends, teachers or family members as they attempt to achieve their goals in life.

Achieving any dream is difficult, Perez told them.

For years, Perez wanted to be a break-dancer. He practiced as much as he could but, during his



Patrick Perez tells students many people might try to squash their dreams, but they need to keep believing in themselves. (Daily Record/Sunday News - bil Bowden)

first competition, reality struck: He was "horrible."

Discouraged but not broken, he went back to practicing and, 10 years later, Perez, or "Pac-Man" as he's known in the break-dancing community, combines his crazy legs and an inspirational message during speaking engagements.

"This is my dream," he said.

Snippets of dance beats rocketed from speakers as Perez showed off his moves. At one point, he brought a few volunteers on stage to teach them the art of break-dancing.

Perez was at the school in conjunction with P.R.I.D.E., a program that focuses on bullying and drug abuse, said Linda Hershner, a teacher at the school.

As part of his program, Perez told the story of a woman named Maria who wanted to be a nurse.

A Mexican immigrant, Maria had to overcome a language barrier, discrimination and being told she wasn't smart enough. She proved her naysayers wrong and went on to work at one of the top 100 hospitals in the country.

Perez likes that story. Maria's his mother.

"Have the courage to believe in your dreams," Perez said.