

Dancing with a Star: Chris Fonseca Visits CEHS | CEHS

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As soon as Chris Fonseca walks into a room, eager cries of "It's the dancer!" and "It's Chris!" can be heard on all sides. Fonseca, who is deaf, is visiting Utah State University from London, England to help celebrate the grand opening of the [Sorenson Legacy Foundation Center for Clinical Excellence](#).

After being in Logan for only one day, Fonseca is already a cherished celebrity to the children of the USU Sound Beginnings program and the Edith Bowen Laboratory School, where students recognized him on Tuesday and gave chase down the hallway. "Hi, you taught me to dance!" beamed one boy as he grabbed Fonseca's hand.

Fonseca's youthful dream while growing up in London was to become a hip-hop dancer. Despite feeling limited in the beginning by his deafness, his hard work and perseverance have brought him international renown as a performer, choreographer, and teacher.

Tuesday morning, Fonseca could be found teaching hip-hop moves to the kids in Sound Beginnings, an early education program for children with hearing loss. Fonseca told the children that while some people hear the music, others feel the music. Within minutes, they were rolling their shoulders, stepping side to side, and feeling the beat.

One of the young boys told Fonseca, "I can dance every move you dance!" That kind of self-assurance is exactly what Fonseca inspires in these students, who are clearly captivated by the ease and power with which he moves. Dr. Beth Foley, dean of the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, took off her shoes and jumped into the circle with the children, twirling and shimmying.

Later that morning, Fonseca taught hip-hop to delighted students at Edith Bowen Laboratory School. Sixth-grade teacher Jennifer Jenkins remarked on the life lessons that her students, particularly those with hearing loss, were learning: "They're saying to themselves 'Look how cool he is! That means I'm cool. I have challenges in my life, but I can overcome them!'"

Prior to this class, some of the sixth-graders had firmly stated that they could not dance. "Now," said Jenkins, "every single one of them is dancing!" Through a British Sign Language interpreter, Fonseca told the students: "How do you know if you can do it or not if you don't try? Keep on trying, and you can achieve! And keep on dancing, you look great!"

Jenkins summed up Fonseca's effect when she said, "It's not the dance itself that empowers these kids. It's *him*."

