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Students at the Lower School at University School of NSU (Official) in Davie recently celebrated their diversity through Cultural Unity Week.



Bringing students together www.sun-sentinel.com

The series of activities concluded with the Unity Fair, which spotlighted a variety of countries and cultures. Students sampled native delicacies, listened to the drumming sounds of Cuba and Israel, observed unique artifacts and left with a broader view of the world.

Davie school hosts Cultural Unity Week

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"We take the opposite approach to tolerance," he said. "Most approaches to tolerance are preachy approaches. They say you should be tolerant. We say, 'This is who I am. I am proud of who I am, and I'm going to share who I am with you.'"

Alp Yurttutan wore a soccer jersey from Turkey, where the fifth-grader lived for seven years.

"I am proud to represent my country," he said. "It is nice to learn and share where everyone comes from."

The children weren't the only ones to participate. Teacher Adrienne Patterson spoke during the week about her family tree, which includes Spanish, Jamaican and African roots. She donned a gown made for her during a trip to visit family in [Guinea](#), West Africa. It was made for the remembrance ceremony for one of her grand-aunts, who died the year before. Each symbol and pattern represented a different generation along the line.

"The event really gives our kids the opportunity to see different cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds," she said. "I find here in the United States that kids are in a sort of bubble. South Florida is a little different because we are such a melting pot, but this is a way to express themselves."

Among the displays was Samoa from Ata Johnson, whose granddaughter Simone attends the school. The mother of [Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson](#) and daughter of "High Chief" Peter Maivia, both pro wrestlers, handed out candy leis to those who visited. She also showed students the items used during a kava ceremony. This is her third year participating in the event.

"I think this is amazing because it allows the children's families to get involved and show their culture," she said.

Lower School Director Nadine Barnes agreed.

"It's wonderful to be able to give our families the opportunity to represent their countries and to allow children to understand differences in cultures to build tolerance and acceptance," she said.

Earlier in the week, the Upper School hosted an International Night with song, dance and drama presentations to represent all parts of the globe. The show was highlighted by a parade of nations with students showcasing flags from the more than 50 countries that make up the Davie school.

By Scott Fishman, Forum Publishing Group

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The University Family Organization helps organize the event. Jennifer Pinkiert, a UFO board member, has seen the concept expand over the past four years.

"The U in U-School is unity," she said. "The kids are so proud of their families, and the parents that participate love being a part of it."