

## Sun-Sentinel Covers Renaissance Research & Role-Playing Unit

Middle School students prove that a five-week Renaissance history unit requiring research, creative writing and demonstrations of mastery can be fun.

# Enjoying hands-on history lessons

## Davie students learn about, portray Renaissance figures

BY SCOTT FISHMAN  
Staff Writer

History recently came to life for seventh-graders at University School in Davie as they learned about and portrayed more than 30 historical figures from the Renaissance era.

During the five-week Renaissance Assessments project, the classes delved into the history of the inventors, poets, artists, philosophers, aristocrats and other visionaries who shaped a prominent time in history.

This exercise in research and role playing has been a part of the school's history curriculum for more than 20 years. Cheri Rothschild was inspired by Steve Allen's "Meeting of Minds," which would bring together actors dressed as famous people to discuss the happenings from their time.

"This unit on the Renaissance is what we call project-based," she said. "All activities lead to a demonstration of mastery at the conclusion."

The project culminated with the Renaissance Feast with the 165 students seated, in costume, by class and country of their characters' origins. Banquet foods were served by parent volunteers with chamber music creating the right ambience. The walls were decorated with scenes from the European countryside.

"The weeks before the feast, students would research not only an individual person, but also the time period in which they lived," Rothschild said. "They explored using their textbook, media center research, class discussions [and] teacher lectures and then produced place mats, costuming, props, creative writings, movies and documentaries on their assigned persons."

Students were then asked questions about the figure they portrayed and graded based on their responses.

Nadine Wiesenthal, who portrayed Anne of Cleves, dedicated more than 10 hours to learning about her subject.

"I got so much out of this amazing learning experience," she said. "The thing I enjoyed learning about most was the life that Anne of Cleves lived after getting divorced from King



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sydney Glicksman portrayed Joan of Arc as part of University School's Renaissance Assessments project.

Henry VIII. She was given plenty of land, including a castle, and plenty of money."

Andrew Singer enjoyed portraying William Shakespeare.

"I was very interested in all of his works," he said. "I found it amazing how he wrote 37 plays and became very famous."

Lily Hirschman portrayed Queen Anne Boleyn.

"I most enjoyed learning about her early years, education and her execution and about all the different tall tales that were told about Anne," she said "... It was a fun project. I wish I could do it again."

Scott Fishman can be reached at [smfishman@tribune.com](mailto:smfishman@tribune.com).



## SCHOOL NEWS

### University School Students Relive the Renaissance Period

BY DEBBY TEICH

**S**EVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NSU IN Davie recently stepped back in time, as they roamed the halls dressed as Henry VIII, Michelangelo, Isaac Newton, Elizabeth I, Anne Boleyn and other inventors, poets, artists, philosophers and aristocrats from the Renaissance period.

It was all part of a five-week curriculum project titled Renaissance Assessments, which is designed to bring the Renaissance and Reformation eras to life. The students studied the works, lives and contributions of more than 34 historical figures. The program culminated with a weeklong feast for the eyes and ears.

The event has been part of the school's world history curriculum for more than 20 years. "As a teacher of history for the past 22 years, I believe the best way to educate students about the past is to bring history to life through simulations of the life back then," said Cheri Rothschild, who organized the event. She says that she was inspired by a television show from the early 60's called "Meeting of the Minds," starring Steve Allen. "He would bring together actors dressed as famous people around a feasting table and they would discuss the happenings of the eras."

The Renaissance unit is project-based, which means that all activities lead to a demonstration of mastery at the conclusion. Each student was assigned a historical figure based on which one best fit their physical description, interests and personality. "The weeks before the feast, students spent time researching the individual person, as well as the time period in which they lived," said Rothschild. "They explored using their textbook, media center research, class discussions, teacher lectures and then produced placemats, costuming, props, creative writings, movies and documentaries on their assigned persons."

For the feast, 165 students came dressed in costume and assumed the role of their characters. They dined on banquet foods, as Chamber music played in the background. The walls of the room were decorated with scenes from the European countryside. After they finished eating, they returned to the classroom to present their characters. "Shakespeare" discussed several of his major works. "Joan of Arc" talked about the turbulent times she endured, as she struggled in her crusades. Leonardo Da Vinci explained some of the childhood influences that inspired him in his adult life. Rothschild says that this project is always a favorite among students. Alumni can often cite their roles in their feasts from years back."

