



SECTION EDITOR RUBEN CUETO, 954-574-5330, rcueto@tribune.com

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Time travel

Students assume
Renaissance-era
roles in Davie

By Scott Fishman
STAFF WRITER

Isaac Newton, Elizabeth I, Henry VIII, Donatello, Magellan, Cervantes, Princess Catherine of Aragon, Da Vinci — they were all recently in Cheri Rothschild's seventh-grade classroom at University School in Davie.

A feast with all the trimmings culminated a five-week journey students took to transform themselves into a character from the Renaissance period.

Rothschild matched children with a figure from that time based on personality and physical appearance. Then they researched their

person through various assignments leading up to becoming the character at the end.

"It was 20 years ago when I decided the best way to teach the Renaissance was to experience it," Rothschild said. "Not all students learn the same way. So what I try to do is offer the same material in many different ways, so that they will find their niche."

The project was inspired by the classic 1970's PBS show *Meeting of Minds*, which featured actors portraying figures throughout history.

Leor Shuffita, 13, of Cooper City, took his role as Michelangelo very seriously. He said he had an easier time learning the material from the hands-on activity than just reading from a textbook.

"The most important thing I want to convey about my character is that he was a brilliant artist, and he should always be remembered as one of the greatest Renaissance men of all time," he said.

"My favorite part about this project was listening to my friends talk about their characters," said Leith Van Schalkwyk, 13, of Davie. "They all had such interesting lives that I found myself wanting to know more and more. ... It really just sucked me in."

Students had to put their creative writing skills to use in a letter to someone in their life explaining the things their person did during the Renaissance



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Rajiv Ramlal portrays Leonardo Da Vinci during the recent Renaissance program at University School in Davie.

that makes them famous. They also had to bring a prop to the feast and explain why they chose it. The most popular part of the project was when the students got to create their own placemats, designed with words, pictures and other things that represent their person.

"They create their own costumes. Some of them rent them, while some of them have grandmothers that make them or put them together," Rothschild said.

The annual activity is a

popular topic of conversation in the higher grade levels. Some of them participated in the project when they were younger and have taken the memories with them.

"[It's] the whole notion of kids sharing from generation to generation," Rothschild said. "There are siblings who say, 'I was William Shakespeare.' This is my signature piece. It's the thing I'll be remembered for when I leave."

Scott Fishman can be reached at SWFISHMAN@tribune.com.