

It's medieval

Ancient times come alive in class

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Hear ye, hear ye. Learning about medieval times used to entail picking up a book and reading. But with the help of a special guest — and motivated by an upcoming Medieval Fair, which represents a sort of final exam on the subject — Harrison High School humanities students literally are immersing themselves in costume and character.

Last week, students from three classes were visited by a Pompeian seamstress named "Diana Paulina," whose actual name is Diane Pauline Werblo. With a sharp Greek accent, not to mention pins, needles and an even sharper wit, Diana took the students back to her 78 AD dress shop and helped wardrobe prospective clients in tunics and stollas.

Diana invited girls and boys up to the front of the classroom to try the ancient garb on for size. After draping dark blue scarf-like material over Megan Springer's head, Diana explained to the class that "this makes her a modest woman who will go to the temple."

Megan also was fitted with a unisex Greek dress, known as a doric chiton.

After also fitting Joe Graves with a doric chiton, the guest stressed the importance of learning as much as pos-

■ AT HARRISON

sible about their characters before Friday, Feb. 16. On that day is the third annual Medieval Fair, where they will perform for classmates and uniquely demonstrate new knowledge about the subject.



Taking a look: Eboree Larkin examines a necklace made in Roman style.

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Suggestions included staying away from superficial Hollywood portrayals. Instead, Diana urged, students should peruse the Internet, as well as glean ideas by looking at statues, paintings and books. Three weeks should be enough time to portray someone who "recently moved to Egypt, but not

enough to be Egyptian."

Another tip was directed to males in the class before they embark on getting into a Middle Ages persona. Earrings are out, "unless you're a pirate."

Diana, a former high school teacher in Indiana who now takes her presentations around the country, then provided another valuable tip, demonstrating how to move from regular personality to their selected character.

"The personality in your character isn't you," she said, without an accent. "If you are shy, your character doesn't have to be shy. Make your character grumpy, morose, whatever you want it to be."

Preparation

Students now have about three weeks to use Diana's advice — both to create their costumes and perfect their roles.

"They will work on their costumes at home and do a lot of thinking about their characters," explained humanities teacher Laura Sparrow, following the visit from Werblo.

Students from three humanities classes (two taught by Sparrow and the third by Michelle Harris) will appear in character "and will receive extra credit if they stay in it all day," Sparrow continued. "Most of them have the chance to pick another person's life and live inside it."

The "performance assessment" pro-



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BEZLER

Modeling: Pompeian seamstress "Diana Paulina" (Diane Pauline Werblo) dresses student Joe Graves in traditional garb.

ject vividly brings to life a chapter from their textbooks. "Brain research shows if you use it (knowledge) it sticks," Sparrow said.

Survey from page A1

tants, answers to questions about satisfaction with district curriculum and other topics were submitted by approximately 400 district residents, selected at random. Those residents could either have had children enrolled in Farmington Public Schools or not.

"There was a good level of responses," said schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield, following the meeting held at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center. "To have 30 percent of busy people fill out an eight-page survey is pretty good."

Maxfield and other district officials said results of the two surveys were gratifying and will help continue in setting new goals and mastering those which were set in the previous Mission 2007 and elementary studies.

"It shows a very strong level of support from parents and other community members," and helps crystallize what they think are important, he said.

Susan Zurvalec, assistant superintendent for staff and community services, said a final, comprehensive document will be available next week for the general public to access.

"I'm very gratified by the results," Zurvalec said. "When we first did the survey in 1995 (also by Public Sector Consultants) we were pleased, but we identified areas to work on, such as to improve communication between the staff and parents" as well as programs and services.

In the new survey results, about 75 percent of total respondents said the district "does an excellent or good job" of keeping them informed.

Looking good

According to the overview and report on major survey findings presented at the board meeting by Jeff Williams and Craig Ruff from Public Sector Consultants, there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of Farmington schools' education; communication between school and home; meeting parent expectations for programs and services.

"You're held in high regard by the community," Williams said to the board. "You're held in high regard by your parents. Not much has changed."

Concurring was Ruff, who asked board members to still take the results from the two surveys in perspective and to use them to keep moving forward in the areas of staff morale, parent satisfaction and student achievement.

"I don't know how much more progress you can make," Ruff said. "You're off the charts."

Some of the findings include the following:

■ Combining results from the two surveys, the percentage of parents giving the district A/B marks increased from 79 percent in 1995 to 85 percent. Non-public school parents doing the same decreased from 70-to-69 percent. Those without school-age children giving an A/B grade to the district improved, from 77 percent in 1995 to 86 percent.

■ More than nine of 10 parents and nonparents "strongly or somewhat agree with the statement that their education tax dollars are a good buy" as do about 75 percent of private school parents.

■ All parents gave top marks in nine of 10 areas of the district's curriculum. These included reading and writing, science, mathematics, health and physical education, social studies, the arts, application of technology, good work habits and learning languages other than English.

In the random, community survey done by phone, more than 84 percent gave the district an A/B grade with about 71 percent giving top marks for how well students are prepared for their futures.

One of the questions asked of the 400 telephone respondents was about what most needed to be improved. About 21 percent could not come up with an answer or major problem; another 18 percent listed various curriculum areas, such as "a return to basic reading, writing and mathematics instruction; more math classes, a better integration of technology into the curriculum."

Meanwhile, a major cause of consumer satisfaction cited by district officials are improved school facilities — largely possible because of renovations made with funds generated because of the successful 1997 bond issue election.

"I think there is a very firm connection between the improvement in satisfaction with bond issue facility improvements," said board President Frank Reid.

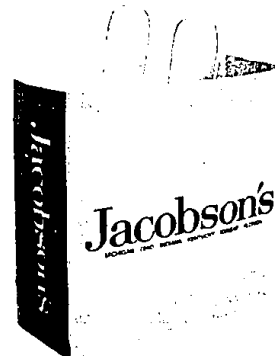
Zurvalec said service from the district improved dramatically over 1995 in seven of 20 areas. Parent expectations were exceeded in the following: meeting or exceeding parent expectations in the usefulness of voice-mail and e-mail, the adequacy of school lunch programs, treating parents courteously, and usefulness of the district Web site, cable channel 10 and school building newsletters.

In the 1995 surveys, none of the 20 listed areas exceeded expectations.

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