

PELHAM EDUCATION FOUNDATION SPONSORS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

On Friday, April 15, English teachers wearing Elizabethan garb strolled through the classrooms and hallways of Pelham Memorial High School, mingling with students and listening to the sounds of Elizabethan music. Quotations from Shakespeare and works of art from, or inspired by, his times covered the walls. On a day when students might otherwise have thought about spring break rather than academics, a day-long Shakespeare Festival, organized by Language Arts Supervisor Sean Llewellyn and funded by The Pelham Education Foundation, helped High School and Middle School students deepen their appreciation for Shakespeare's works and the historical context that inspired them.

The festival revolved around the auditorium, where brief student performances continued throughout the day. Students performed scenes from works studied in their English classes this year, including *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. Student-produced videos highlighted some of the many words and phrases that Shakespeare introduced to the English language and examined the painting techniques of Shakespeare's time. Students and teachers read sonnets, accompanied by student musicians.

Down the hall, students and faculty members stopped by the Poetry Café. Following a long-standing school tradition that supports the *Door* student literary magazine, guests were encouraged to read original poetry or share the works of their favorite poets.

In the "Elizabethan Culture Corner", hosted by teachers Robert Serafin and Valerie Cadet, students tasted cakes baked by their classmates following Elizabethan recipes, tried on costumes typical of Shakespeare's time, and learned about music of the era. Differences between the foods available to the lower classes and those enjoyed by the wealthy, as well as differences in the kinds of music played at court, in the streets, in churches and in theaters, illuminated the social structure of England around 1600.

AP English students worked with teacher Tom Beck to teach Middle School students about the construction, design, destruction and reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe Theater. Then, the older students cheerfully subjected themselves to insults—direct from Shakespeare's plays—from their sixth grade acting partners.

Ms. Wasnetsky's students used live performances, music videos, self-produced videos and other media to teach classmates about Shakespeare's lasting legacy as reflected in modern movies, plays and popular songs.

All secondary English teachers, along with the special education teachers who work with them, prepared for the festival by participating in a six-hour "Shakespeare Set Free" workshop led by a facilitator from the Folger Shakespeare

Library. The teachers learned about interdisciplinary, student-centered and performance-based approaches to teaching Shakespeare. Teachers of other disciplines, such as social studies, art and music, participated in planning and implementing the festival and supported its theme by helping students to understand literature and the arts as reflections of a time, place and culture.

Events like the Shakespeare Festival that enhance the educational experiences of students are made possible through grants from The Pelham Education Foundation. The Foundation welcomes donations from the community at any time, and will show its appreciation for gifts by flying balloons at the home or place or business of every donor on Saturday, May 7. Donations can be made online at www.pelhameducationfoundation.net or by checks sent to The Pelham Education Foundation, c/o Jenn Langerfeld at 495 Carol Place.