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Middle school students in Fair Lawn revisit the 80s

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Fair Lawn - Memorial Middle School celebrated the 1980s for the first time as part of its Decades of Discovery program.

The annual event culminated with Grandparents Day on Feb. 17 where grandparents are invited to share their memories of the decade. Students and staff members got into the spirit by sporting neon colors, side ponytails, jumpsuits and off-the-shoulder shirts.

"Welcome to the 1980s," said Principal Natalie Lacatena as students gathered in the auditorium for an afternoon concert with Squeaky Clean. "The 1980s were a great time, but as you can see the fashions were not so great."

Now in its 10th year, the weeklong program, sponsored by the Celebrate Character Program and organized by guidance counselor Greg Pepe, serves as "a way to be grateful to those who came before us," said teacher Laurianne Brunetti.

"The 80s was a decade of boldness," said Brunetti, who noted that during a decade a generation can go through a lot of changes, successes and conflicts.



Students and faculty at Memorial Middle School dressed in the style of the 1980s for the Decades of Discovery program at the school. Jake Rodas (left) dressed as Michael Jackson while Steven Trinidad came as a decade of time with Pac-Man in between them. NICK MESSINA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Those changes were reflected in the new original show, "Big 80s," presented by Squeaky Clean. The group, which was created by Suzanne Smithline and Glenn Paul Manion in 1983, has performed at the school for nine years.

In the past years the school has rotated through the 1950s, 60s and 70s and this was the first venture into the 1980s.

"This show was a special request two years ago," said Manion.

The multi-media show was based on technology changes in the 1980s. It opened with "What I Like About You" by The Romantics as images of "big" looks and items such as shoulder pads, Big Wheels and the movie "Big," flashed across the screen.

They took on Madonna's "Material Girl" and then they asked "Who you gonna call" in "Ghostbusters" as clips from 1980s movies were on display. Teddy Ruxpin came on the screen to talk about technology advances in toys like Speak & Spell and Nintendo. Squeaky Clean then played Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" with students dancing in the aisles and images of Cabbage Patch Kids, Care Bears and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles on screen.



Squeaky Clean's performance of "Eye of Tiger" from 1982 highlighted sports scenes from the decade. It was noted that MTV launched in 1981 and then as Michael Jackson's "Thriller" played students gathered on stage to dance.

Students cheered while photos from their teachers from the 1980s were shown while "I've Had the Time of My Life" was played. The program ended with Journey's "Don't Stop Believin' " as clips of news events from the decade were displayed. Students gathered across the front of the stage to sing along.

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