Shift to “4 C’s” at Gateway Middle School

Huntington – Sixth graders at Gateway Regional Middle School showcased their work on intensive, integrated non-fiction research reports about natural phenomena to their peers and teachers last week at the school.

Staff reported that this assignment was designed to encourage writing across the curriculum and integrated English Language Arts, science and technology standards. Each student authored a non-fiction research report to generate awareness of earth’s natural disasters and natural occurrences.

Students were required to include a number of features into their reports, based on print (a table of contents, glossaries, index/indices, key/guide words), graphic aids (diagrams, graphs/charts/tables/maps, and a timeline); illustrations (drawings and photographs to build visual understanding); and organizational aids (the use of things like bold print, italics, titles, headings, subheadings, captions and side bars) to draw readers to the most important information and better understand the material.

Students paired with those from other sixth grade classrooms to share their research findings, and to give feedback on each other’s work. Topics covered a large number of natural events, such as sinkholes, blizzards, tsunamis, hail, earthquakes, thunderstorms, and volcanoes, etc. Every Gateway student in grades 3 – 10 is issued a Chromebook, which were used to conduct online research. Those in teacher Joe Hough’s classroom also presented their reports using their Chromebooks, while the other classrooms used poster board.

As the year goes on, Hough said, students will do more and more presentations through technology, using slide shows and other presentation formats on their Chromebooks.

Periodically, teachers paused to hear shout-outs from the pairs about what they really liked about each other’s work, or to reorganize the grade into different groups.

The following day, when they returned to their own classrooms, they also reflected on their own work, after reviewing other students’ work.

This project reflects a recent shift in teaching with an increasing emphasis on integrated learning and 21st Century Skills (which promote deeper learning through collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity) at the school.

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Photos (left to right): Sixth graders at Gateway Middle School share and critique each other’s research on natural disasters and phenomena, in a new integrated project at the school.