Huntington — Sixth grade teachers Laura Fisk, Darlene Grady, Joe Hough and Asher Rotenberg rewarded students with a holiday breakfast at the end of a project that had students sharing books they had read and compiling a list of ‘good reads’, just in time for the holiday break!

On Tuesday, December 22 students reported to the sixth grade double room for the event. Each brought a placemat they had made that summarized their book, described the story’s conflict, the book’s connections to other books or events, and ended with an overall evaluation of the book.

Students were seated in small groups around tables and, at timed intervals, passed the placemats around the table. They read each other’s work and kept a log of all of the book reports they reviewed. Students were also asked to log whether or not they wanted to read each book and why.

“We used to do this project by having students create cereal boxes,” recalled Laura Fisk. “But they were getting more involved with creating games to play on the back of the boxes and weren’t going as deeply into the content of the book as this project does. This project reflects higher order thinking.”

Sixth graders had used the last two weeks to read their books and develop their placemat. They used their Chromebooks® to write their content in Google Docs; final edits were printed at school and then pasted into the placemat. Many featured student artwork depicting a scene from the book.

The use of technology in such projects is nothing new for these middle school students. Each Gateway student in grades 3 – 7 have been issued a Chromebook (a tablet-sized computing device), which will stay with them through junior high school. These students have used technology extensively—in the form of the Chromebooks, macbooks, iPads, iPods and smart boards—since Kindergarten.

At the end of the placemat book sharing, teachers served students a breakfast of pancakes, sausage, fruit, juice, homemade blueberry muffins and bagels to reward their hard work.

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Photo: Sixth grader Leo Balboni reads through a classmate’s ‘book report placemat’ to decide if this one will go on his list of books to read later.