



Character Corner

A Monthly Newsletter from School Counselor, Connie Cotrone

DECEMBER 2025



STAR Students & Staff

Students and staff at Columbus are continuing to show behaviors that are responsible, respectful & safe and embody our district's qualities of a learner. For the month of December, students and staff were recognized for demonstrating STAR behavior that was above and beyond what is typically expected. Names of all December recipients were announced each week and STARS have been placed in the cafeteria celebrating their accomplishments.

Please see a comprehensive list of all our December STARS.

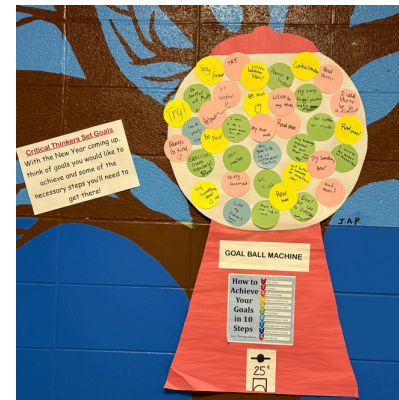
Sal Bolin	Bethany Lucia-Cotter	Courtney Foley
Hunter Roy	Riley Cudden	Kayla Conrad
Theresa Harwood	Juliette Costello	Gavin Utschig
Miles Wallin	Zac Holand	Connor Kearns
Maddox Courniotes	Ella Quin	Lea Schrank
Hayden Mills	Dafina Brika	Savannah Totino
Dalilah Chavez	Lily Ann Stallone	Sarah DeJesus
Ryan Lucas	Dylan Pungello	Pino Sparano
Massimo Pannone	Mateo DeWald	Will Duff
Naina Jacob	Daniela Giannone	Athan Canaras
Christopher Molina	Capri Carter	Benjamin DeWald
Reise Spahr	Amir Celaj	Alessandra Camaj
Cara Piliero	Lucas Montaldo	Amelia Ross
Scarlett Garibaldi	Chris Ippolito	Skylar Arcuri
Alexa Lohay	Bridget Grasso	Colter Underwood
Margaret Zhang	Elizabeth Drelich	

Mrs. Moore & Mr. Banner's Class
Mrs. Dockett & Mrs. Gleason's Class

Character Education

The December theme of the month based on our Portrait of a Learner is Critical Thinker. Weekly announcements focused on how critical thinking is essential both inside and outside of the classroom.

With the New Year approaching, students were asked to be self-aware and think about goals they would like to achieve. What do they want to improve upon? What necessary steps will they need to take to accomplish their goals? Students filled our "GOAL BALL" machine with lots of wonderful ideas.



Ben's Bells

"Kindness is contagious!"

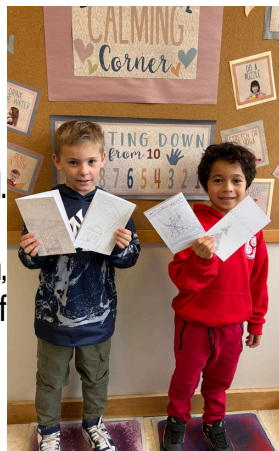
Ben's Bells is a program we use to promote the practice of intentional kindness. Each month students and staff nominate people who have shown genuine acts of kindness. Congratulations to our December recipients for making a difference in the lives of others.

Critical Thinkers Making a Difference

Third graders, Evan L. and Winston R., in Mr. Windman's class, are wonderful examples of how Critical Thinkers can make a difference. The two friends brainstormed ways they could contribute to helping children around the world.

They designed holiday cards to sell and all proceeds are being donated to the organization, Action Against Hunger. Columbus is so proud of these students for being empathetic, problem solving critical thinkers.

Great job boys!





Making a connection...



How to reinforce character education at school and home



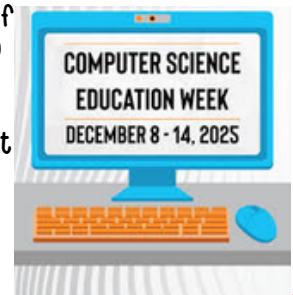
STEAM Special

This month, students in Ms. Gabriel's class demonstrated strong critical thinking skills through hands-on STEM challenges across grade levels. Third graders explored objects in motion by investigating how forces, like pushes and pulls, affect movement, making predictions, testing ideas and explaining their results. Fourth graders took on the role of engineers by designing their own games or fidgets, applying problem solving skills as they planned, tested, and improved their designs based on criteria and constraints. Fifth graders showcased higher-level thinking by creating dioramas, using creativity and reasoning to represent concepts in a detailed, visual way.



Library Special

This month in the library with Mrs. Finno, 5th graders practiced being critical thinkers through hands-on technology activities. In celebration of Computer Science Education Week, students were introduced to the fundamentals of coding and how computers follow precise instructions. Students then applied these skills while playing an online puzzle game that challenged them to think strategically, test solutions, and revise their thinking.



What can I do at home?

Being a critical thinker applies to more than just the classroom. When we stop and think before we act, we are being critical thinkers because we are thinking of the consequences of our actions, which helps us make better decisions. The visual below is helpful to encourage children to stop and think and could be used at home to help practice emotional regulation. When children are impulsive, this is helpful language. Children can brainstorm ways to keep calm before making a choice. If they already made a choice that wasn't the best, reflecting on a better choice next time can also be a good teachable moment.



Critical Thinkers Help Others

Student Council, led by 5th grade teachers Christine Galbo & Maureen Valvano, has been busy this month organizing a winter toy drive to support the Children's Village in Dobbs Ferry. Students, families and faculty collaborated for this effort and donated many new toys, crafts, stuffed animals, games, gift cards, among many other items to brighten the holidays for others.

Thanks to all who contributed for your kindness and generosity!

