

Becoming a Panther Peer at CRS

At Concord Road School we are an inclusive learning community. We believe that all students should have equal access to opportunities who otherwise might be excluded, such as those having physical or intellectual disabilities. Becoming a Panther Peer is one opportunity students get to demonstrate what we believe in because, at Concord Road Elementary School, we believe in fostering a respectful environment.

A Panther Peer is a fourth-grade student who volunteers to play with students who are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) during recess. Panther Peers are responsible for being positive role models. They spend recess time with a student with ASD from special classes 1 and 2. Each week they engage in conversations and they play various activities together. Panther Peers have the benefit of finding new friends, understanding differences, and feeling good about themselves as a helper. The students with ASD have the opportunity to play with a friend, build socialization skills and make new friends. All students have the opportunity to learn about social, and behavioral needs, and develop compassion.

The fourth-grade volunteers spend time with our school psychologists, Dr. Michael Moffatt & Ms. Monica Ricci, learning about Autism Spectrum Disorder. During their time together, students ask clarifying questions and learn more about ASD. They generate conversational prompts and questions they can ask while playing together.

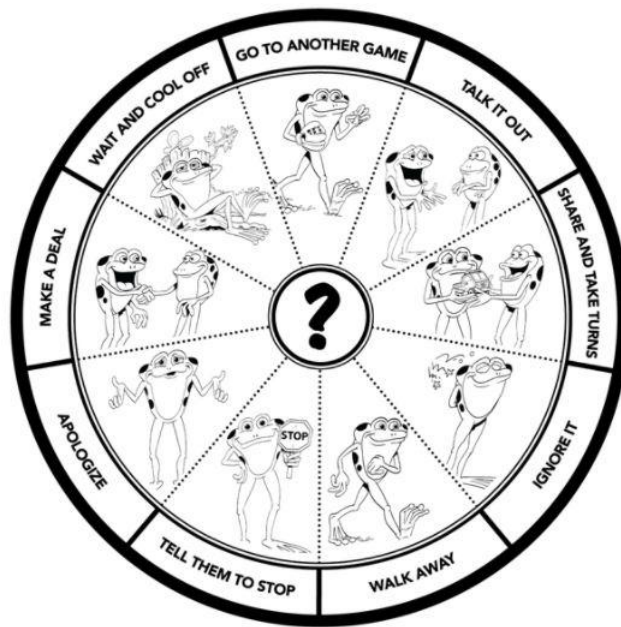
I had the opportunity to join the orientation. I asked the students why they chose to volunteer. Innesa Ladha from Mrs. Andersen's class said, "I love helping people." Libby Vizner from Ms. Nuñez's class shared, "My brother did the program and one of my neighbors has ASD so I want to help too." Stella Mendoza added, "My mom is an occupational therapist. I went to work with her and I want to help people just like my mom does."

CRS Panther Updates:

- February 7th through February 11th is National School Counselor Week. The American School Counselor Association sponsors school counselors for the first full week of February every year. The purpose of this week is to recognize the unique contributions of school counselors. School counselors have a tremendous impact on helping students achieve success in school. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize our school counselor and give a shout-out to Mrs. Stavrou for her ongoing dedication to our students and the school community. Students have shared with me what they have learned from Mrs. Stavrou and how they use the strategies she has taught them when they are playing during recess or have a conflict in their lives. During her guidance series, she helps students understand how they feel using the R.U.L.E.R. tools, and calming strategies so students can effectively communicate how they feel when resolving conflicts.

- Mrs. Stavrou also teaches our students about Kelso's Choice Wheel. Kelso the frog teaches students how to solve "small" problems on their own. "Small" problems include conflicts that cause "small" feelings of annoyance, embarrassment, boredom, etc. "Big" problems always need to be taken to an adult. These are situations that are scary, dangerous, illegal, etc. When your child comes to you to solve their "small problem," tell them to try one or two of Kelso's Choices first. If that doesn't work, then an adult can intervene. Make sure your kids know to ask an adult for help in the event of a "Big Problem."

Kelso has nine choices to solve "small problems." These are illustrated in Kelso's Choice Wheel.



- February break begins on **Monday, February 21, 2022**. We will return to school on **Monday, February 28, 2022**. Reminder: We will be distributing COVID-19 kits again next week for each student. You will be encouraged to test your CRS child(ren) on **Sunday, February 27, 2022** before returning to school on Monday. This is an additional mitigation strategy to help us stay safe and get back to a sense of normalcy sooner.
- Parent-teacher conferences (PTC) will be held on **Friday, March 11, 2022**, and **Friday, March 25, 2022**. The students will have a half-day of school. Conferences will take place in person or via Zoom. Your child's classroom teacher will reach out to schedule a time to meet with you. The purpose of PTC in March is to check in on your child's progress. The PTA will sell spirit wear during PTC near the front entrance.