Computer Science Week kicked off on Dec. 4, and all month long elementary students in Cranston Public Schools were partaking in a variety of computer science activities. Students played games and took tutorials; read biographies of computer coding pioneers like Margaret Hamilton, a NASA programmer; took part in computational thinking exercises; and developed a greater insight into the role of computer programming in everyday lives.

While working together to solve challenges and coding puzzles, the students learned 21st century skills applicable to communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, imagination, and problem solving.

The school librarians also gave the students a curated archive of games, tutorials and challenges, which the students continue to have access to in and outside of school, like at guides.rilinkschools.org/bobcats/HourofCode2017.

Hour of Code and Code.org also add games and challenges each year, with perennial favorites Minecraft, Angry Birds, Moana, Frozen, Ice Age, and Star Wars. Preschoolers can learn to code with Kodable and elementary students can learn programming with Scratch.

“The students’ greater familiarity with coding, technology and computational thinking is yielding thinkers who are creative; who are not afraid of taking risk; and who can look at a problem collectively and learn from their mistakes,” Susan Rose, Library Program Supervisor for Cranston Public Schools, wrote in an email. “What an excellent set of skills to take into the New Year.”