

Patch Southeast-Brewster Mark Jacobs

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Longview Students and Staff Present at AEROx Conference

Students explain their school's philosophy at first ever AEROx virtual conference

By Mark Jacobs, Patch Contributor | Feb 24, 2019 12:05 am ET

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Longview School students were honored last month by being asked to participate in a panel about their school and its unique educational approach as part of the AEROx Virtual Conference. AERO, the Alternative Education Resource Organization, has been working to advance learner-centered, learner-driven, self-directed education opportunities throughout the world for the last 30 years. Today was its first ever fully virtual conference. The event focused on taking a deeper dive into current issues in alternative education. The format combined hour-long workshops and TED-style mini-talks.

Longview students were part of a panel to give the more than 90 conference participants an understanding of the Longview approach. Current students Devorah, Emma, Jamie and Raphael, and former student Ben Pousada focused on some of the key components of the program: relevant, inquiry-based, hands-on academics; a vibrant student-centered democracy and justice system; and a community environment in which students work

hand-in-hand with staff to run the school. Students discussed how a Longview education specifically helped prepare them for life during and after K-12 schooling. Conveying the sense of community driven by collaborative rather than top-down decision making especially impressed the workshop attendees.

Earlier in the day, Longview Director, Mark Jacobs, delivered one of the TED-style talks entitled, “Solving Problems in Schools Collaboratively and Proactively: Teaching Skills is as Important as Teaching Academics.” In his talk, Mr. Jacobs laid out a process for coping with challenging behavior of students both inside and outside of the classroom. “Teachers and parents typically act as if challenging behavior is a problem with motivation, one that can be solved with a system of rewards and punishments. What the psychological and educational research of the last 30 years shows is that behavior challenges typically have to do with lagging skills, not a lack of motivation. As a result, even with the threat of punishment or the promise of rewards, misbehavior continues.”

In this talk, Mr. Jacobs discussed Longview’s implementation of the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions Model which was developed by Dr. Ross Greene. “Even after only 6 months of using this model, we have seen improved behavior of students, and better communication between staff and students. The secret seems obvious: teach the social/emotional skills the students are lacking, rather than punishing the challenging behaviors that result from these lagging skills. By doing so in a proactive, collaborative way, we are finding solutions to problems that are realistic and mutually satisfactory, those that meet the needs of both the student and the teacher.”

In addition to the Longview participants, the conference organizers brought in long-time educational experts such as Chris Mercogliano, former director of the Albany Free School; Ken Danforth, founder of North Star--Self-Directed Learning for Teens, and Dr. Peter Gray, research professor from Boston College. Workshop virtual attendees had a full day of talks and workshops covering a wide range of progressive educational approaches. Longview School hopes to host an in-person AEROx conference this November.

Longview School is a non-profit private school located in the Village of Brewster, New York. For more information about their program, the school website is www.longviewschool.org.