



Longview School Participates in NY State Youth Legislature

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Youth Legislature passes Longview students' bill opening up public and many private places to Support Dogs.

Brewster, NY — Middle school students from Longview School travelled up to Albany this week to participate in the New York State Youth Legislature. This is a YMCA-sponsored program in which New York middle school students participate in a simulation in which they act as Senators and Assembly Members. Students arrived at the conference already having written bills to be considered by the Youth Legislature. Bill sponsors had to introduce the bill, answer questions and make a summation.

In the weeks leading up to the conference, Longview students went through a rigorous selection process to choose one bill to bring to Albany. Their bill requires that Support Dogs, those used for anxiety or depression by New Yorkers in need, have the same access to public and some private locations as do Service Dogs (most often used by the blind). In order to make sure implementation of this measure would be minimally disruptive (unlike stipulations for Service Dogs, which require no official certification), under the proposed bill, Support Dogs would have to be trained and certified by a Certified Professional Dog Trainer—Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA). Longview students Zachary Clarke, Himuka Goto and Koryn Lindjem travelled to Albany to advocate for their bill's passage.

One might think the gathered middle schoolers would pass bill after bill without considering the social, moral and fiscal implications; nothing was further from the truth. Many more bills were rejected than passed, including a bill to lower the drinking age to 18. Bills were passed to start the school day no earlier than 8:45 AM for middle and high school students, and to license sellers of vapes and e-cigarettes.

Longview students are not strangers to participatory democracy. They attend one of the many democratic schools in the world. Democratic, in this case, is not in contrast to Republican, but to non-democratic schools where students have little say in the running of their school communities. At Longview, students and teachers make and enforce all the rules of the school in a one-person, one-vote system. Each week, they meet in the School Meeting, the school's legislative body. They brought this extensive experience up to Albany this week.

In the end, Longview students' Support Dog Bill passed the Youth Legislature and was signed by the Youth Governor. All the bills that were passed will be sent to the actual New York State legislators who have based bills that eventually turned into actual state laws in the past. Longview students hope the same will happen to their bill.

Longview School is a K-12 non-profit, NY State-recognized private school which has been pioneering student choice in education since 2001. It is located on Main Street in Brewster, 100 yards from the train station. In its small, family-like environment—30 to 40 total students—Longview follows a democratic model which empowers children to take on real-world responsibilities as they grow to become independent, responsible, educated, happy adults.

The New York State Youth Legislature is a project sponsored by the YMCA. The Y is made up of people of all ages and from every walk of life working side-by-side to strengthen communities. Together they work to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, age, cultural background, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, ideology, income, national origin, race or sexual orientation has the opportunity to reach their full potential with dignity. Their core values are caring, honesty, respect and responsibility—they guide everything they do.