



LONGVIEW SCHOOL

Reinventing Education One Child at a Time

Handbook and FAQs

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The Longview Big Picture

What kind of school is Longview?

Longview is an independent, private school for kindergarten through 12th-grade students, located in Brewster, NY. Our students learn rigorous academics, but academic knowledge is only a part of education. We help students succeed in life by developing confidence and responsibility as well.

Longview is a democratic school with aspects based on the Sudbury School model. Democratic schooling means that the students have direct access to and control over their environment. This in turn leads to a sincere investment in contributing to their surroundings, their curricula, and their community. The school is run by a democratic meeting of the staff and student. Much like the old-fashioned town hall, issues are raised and discussed, and solutions are proposed, voted on, and enacted by majority support. By teaching our students that they can alter their environment, we are engaging them in higher-level thinking about their education, their autonomy, and their roles in the community. This is a lesson they then take with them into the wider world as capable adults ready to acknowledge, address, and find solutions for the problems they encounter.

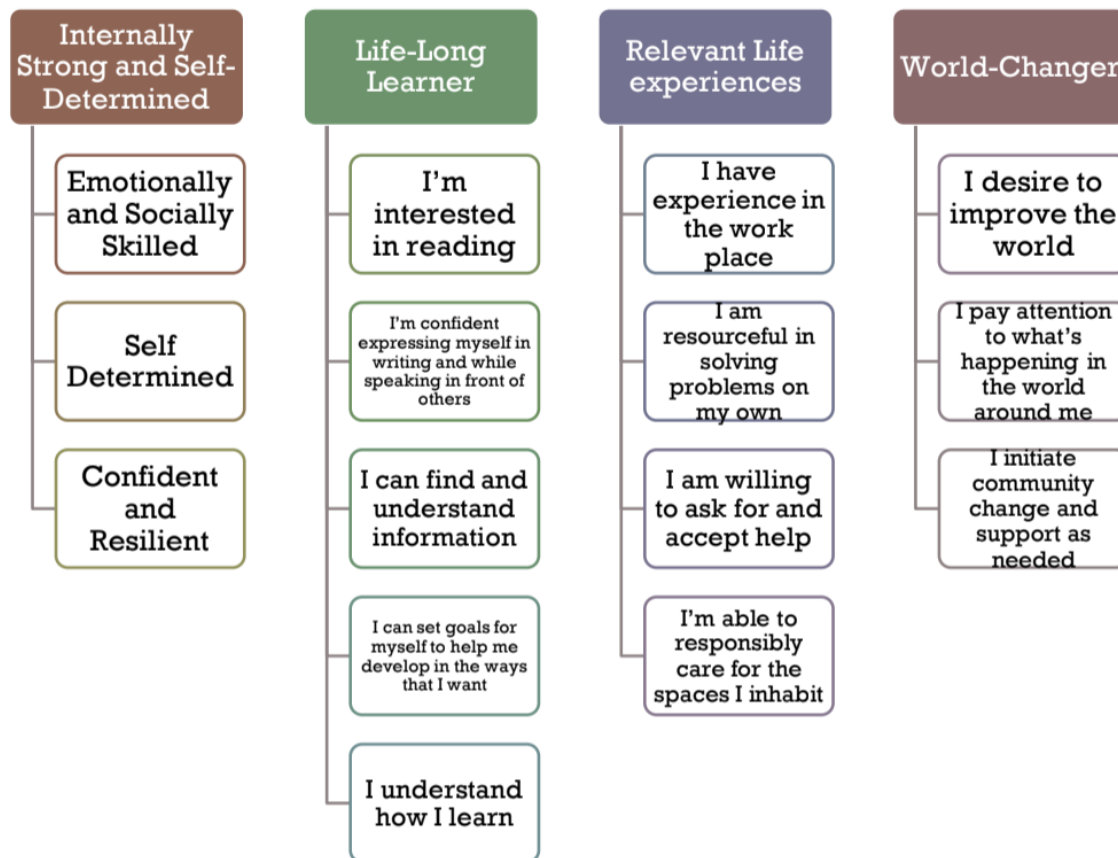
What are the goals of the Longview educational experience?

The world is teetering on a tightrope. On one side is the depths of loathing, both of oneself and other. On the other side is a beautiful future, where an advanced technological society is populated by people who are effective, knowledgeable, and self-aware, people who care deeply about each other. If Longview and other like-minded organizations are successful, hopefully we teeter in the right direction. – Mark Jacobs, co-founder & director

Longview offers a small, close-knit school community where no student falls through the cracks, where everyone is embraced for who they are, and where

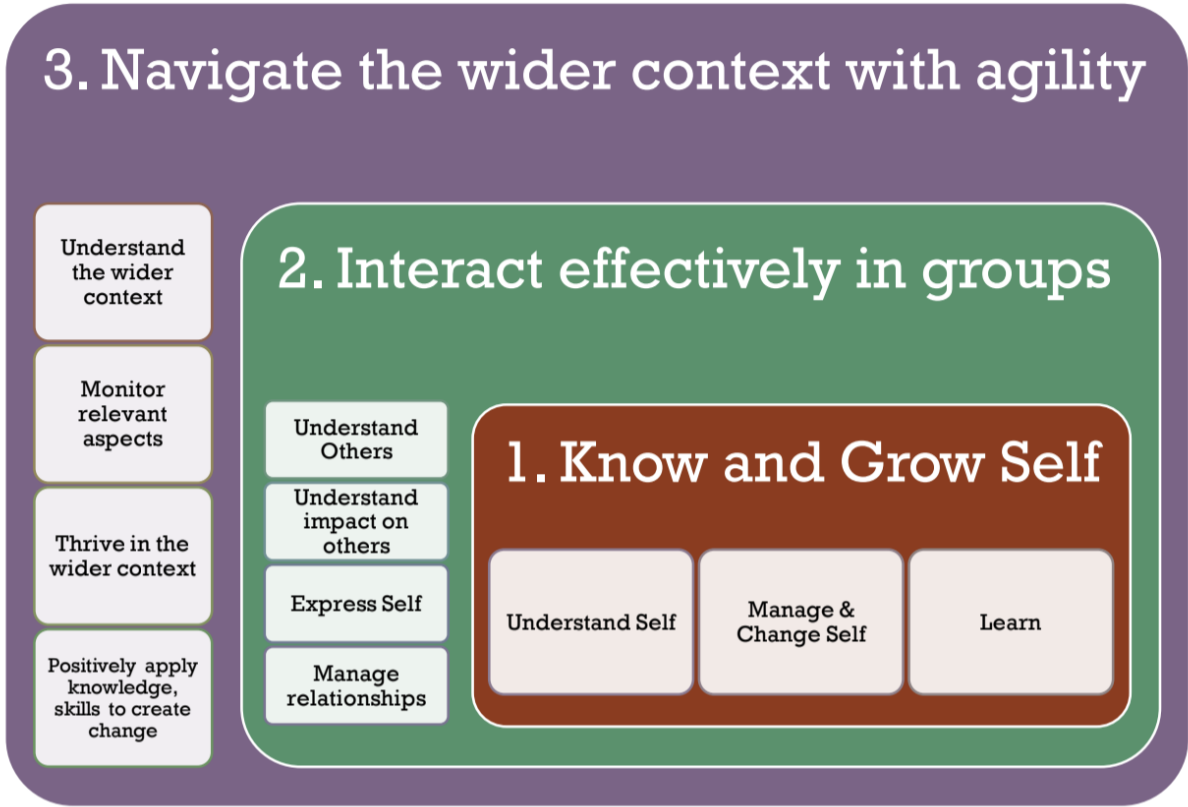
academic rigor is a natural result of classes which are relevant to students' lives and involve doing, as much as observing.

We help our students become internally strong, self-determined, life-long learners who are effective in their personal lives and are committed to making the world a better place. We do this through their active participation in Academics, Relevant Life Experiences, and the Longview Community.



How does Longview help students develop?

The Longview Way is all about students learning how to develop goals and find their unique path. We help students:



Know and Grow Self

To build self-knowledge, Longview students participate in self-reflection activities throughout the year. In class, teachers ask students to reflect on their strengths and their progress. With their mentors, students set goals and learn how to track progress towards those personal goals. Understanding yourself will help you have a better idea about the goals you want to achieve and the strengths you can access to achieve them.

Interact Effectively in Groups

At Longview, we help students develop group interaction skills both inside the classroom and outside of it in the wider world. In class, students work on small and large group projects, and assume different roles to do so. Teachers facilitate group reflection and interaction. And finally, students learn how to respectfully evaluate each other’s work. We also work on these skills outside of class.

School trips and special school community building days are good opportunities to hone group interaction skills. Through our clerkships, peer mediation, and judicial committees, we intentionally help students strengthen their ability to relate to various roles in the community, not just to do the task. Some of these activities give students practice in developing their conflict mediation, conflict resolution, and project management skills.

Lastly, Longview staff intentionally interact with students outside of class all the time (before school, at lunch, after school), and especially so with students who are shy and withdrawn, or find social situations more challenging. Being able to improve group interactions is a skill that will help students achieve their goals, because in most cases, their personal goals involve interacting with people in many different roles.

Navigate the wider context

At Longview, we help students relate to the wider community in a number of ways. In classrooms, students might connect a topic with virtual groups, projects, or related organizations to complete meaningful work. Sometimes we facilitate connections with penpals. To display student work or facilitate study of a topic, we might collaborate with a local museum or other organization, and offer trips into the wider community. Sometimes these collaborations result in participating in a community service project. We enjoy having international students or facilitating short-term home stays because it also helps connect Longview to the wider world just as we invite professionals to come to school and share their passions. Finally, high school students - particularly in the junior and senior years - find internships in areas about which they are passionate.

Our Curriculum

How is the curriculum determined?

Curiosity is a central tool of our educational process. Students are repeatedly encouraged to create and discover their own answers to the questions they ask. We know that this creative process is analogous to real life and is present when

students construct their learning, as well as when students take art classes in which students explicitly question and find meaning in their creative process. In many of our classes, students are exposed to professionals in a variety of fields relevant to the body of knowledge being discussed. For example, in our art classes, students meet real-world artists and gain exposure to working art studios. Likewise, in history classes, students hear from elected officials and others who are actively engaged in impacting society.

Our hope is that all students will find their passions, which is not always easy when their education is limited to a traditional curriculum. For that reason, we offer a slew of once-a-week electives in areas hardly ever taught at the K-12 level. These include game programming, engineering, movie making, photography, calligraphy, public speaking, debate, philosophy, psychology, forensics, carpentry, sociology, game programming, Minecraft, sculpture, comic book culture, graphic novels, current events, strategy games, among others. Each spring, students have an opportunity to suggest options for the next year's electives. Some recent examples of this are Maker Class-3D Printing; Publish It-Create your own book, blog, vlog or magazine; Personal Storytelling; Civilization V-Build Your Empire; Woodworking; and many others. In some of our core academic areas like social studies and science, we rotate topics across the years. For example, one year in science, the focus might be on Biology; another year, it might be on Chemistry. Likewise, the social studies curriculum might be Global History one year and U.S History the next.

The foundation of our curriculum is our approach to *how* we teach not just *what* we teach.

Unlike in traditional teaching and learning, Longview School promotes inquiry-based instruction where teachers present the students with problems, and in the process of solving them, students ask questions, figure out the answers, and look deeply into the issues involved. As they do so, they reinforce the neural connections in their brains so that students not only understand the material on a much deeper level, but also remember it for much longer, often for the rest of their lives.

At Longview, we promote project-based learning, where students have the opportunity to work on projects that can last for days, weeks, or even months.

Doing projects is much more engaging than traditional assignments because they are interdisciplinary and authentic. Instead of just being limited to one subject area, students propose and complete projects that cross traditional bounds, just like those in the real world. Instead of busywork created by the teacher to have students prove what they know, the projects correspond to the work done in real settings done by writers, scientists, historians, mathematicians, computer programmers, and others.

At Longview, we promote real-world application through the curriculum. Much of the work students do connects to the real world. In our Real World Math classes, students learn how to create a budget, pay bills for a household, find a place to live, interview for a job, fill out a 1040 tax form, and much more. In our Idea to Income class, students actually start a business, going through the process of planning, launching, and running a business. In our Longview 2.0 class, students learn about interior design by actually planning the rooms in our building.

At Longview, we also believe in creating opportunities for real-world learning outside of the classroom. This is done through our community citizenship responsibilities:

- **our clerkship system**, in which students share all the work of running and taking care of the school
- **our democratic governance meetings**, where students create and review community rules, as well as make decisions that affect the community as a whole
- **our court system**, where students hold all community members accountable for keeping community rules

At Longview, community citizenship responsibilities are **an integral part of our curriculum**. You don't have to wait to graduate from high school for the work you are doing to connect to the real world—that happens each and every week.

Students may also participate in the local and wider community in a variety of ways.

- They exhibit their art at local libraries.

- They make presentations at conferences and other educational experiences. For example, students presented at recent AERO and AEROx conferences.
- They participate in local community activities like the village-wide cleanup for Earth Day.

What is the difference between the self-directed and the academic tracks? How should we decide what's best for our child?

Academically, we believe in depth over breadth. As a private school, we are not required to give all the state benchmark tests. This allows us to spend the time our students need on each topic before moving on to the next. Our staff is skilled at differentiating instruction and our class sizes are small; this enables us to provide an individualized education that is truly differentiated to meet students. This means that students of varying levels in the same class are able to thrive by being taught just what they need to learn next.

We offer two academic educational tracks, one which covers the range of traditional subjects - the academic track - and the other which allows your children to direct their own education - the self-directed track.

On the academic track, students cover the range of curricular areas including the core subjects (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies/History) plus other required areas such as Art, Foreign Language, and Physical Education in their course selections. There is time in the students' schedules to take elective classes as well. Families who choose this track tend to want to be sure their children learn the same skills and knowledge as they would in public school.

On the self-directed track, the child's interests are central. Some families prefer to have their children be the captain of their own ship when it comes to their education. Students on this track have no specific course requirements; they can take as many or as few of the classes offered at the school as they so choose. They can combine self-directed projects, self-designed classes, and independent activities (playing, reading, thinking, creating, imagining) with Longview

coursework. Families with students on this track tend to believe that no specific knowledge is essential, and instead think that skills learned studying any subject can be cross-applied to other content areas when the need arises.

Regardless of the path that students choose, their learning experience at Longview empowers them to become internally strong, self-determined, life-long learners, who are effective in their personal lives and are committed to making the world a better place.

What are the expectations around homework?

Homework, when it occurs, is generally for skill practice. Teachers determine which skills to prioritize for practice and such practice can take place in regular class time, in study skills, and sometimes at home. Regardless of the desired skill or level, the expectations for homework are highly individualized. Sometimes homework is necessary as students, especially in older grades, work on projects which are usually broken up into parts that students need to address over time. Teachers work together with students to help them meet goals whether in terms of skill development or the creation of a particular project. On average, MS and HS students have about an hour of homework to do each evening, while ES students have about 20 minutes of homework. This fluctuates throughout the semester, and some students use their free time at school to do required work, and so may bring home significantly less work.

If teachers notice that something assigned for homework is not getting done, they may offer students the opportunity to use makeup times during the school day, generally in the morning and around noon. Our general philosophy is that homework should not be overwhelming.

How are students graded at Longview? When and how can I learn about how my child is doing?

Our evaluation strategies hold students to rigorous standards while focussing on their individual growth and development. We employ daily assessments that happen through the natural course of engaging in small group and personalized

instruction. While there aren't many formal tests, larger projects are a part of the curriculum and students often have a summative project due for each part of the year.

The academic year is broken down into three trimesters. At the end of each trimester, each student receives a written report card with extensive notes on what they have learned, and how they have participated and demonstrated understanding. Once they reach middle school, students also receive a traditional grade on a scale of A to F for core courses and some electives; some electives may be graded Pass / Fail. Then, teachers meet with students and parents during family conferences (see below).

Like everything else at Longview, our assessment is differentiated to meet individual needs. The grade itself reflects the work the students did and the skills they developed against the baseline for that individual student. At Longview, our grades reflect how well students focused and worked hard on the skills teachers determined were priorities.

Of course, parents do not have to wait for these formal check-ins. The value of a small community is that you should feel you can reach out to an individual teacher or your child's mentor at any time to find out how teachers perceive your child to be progressing.

What are clerkships, school meetings, and internships? Who participates and how are they related to the purpose of Longview School?

As much as we offer students a quality academic experience, we also believe that academics must be grounded in real-world experiences. Central to this are clerkships and school meetings - key pillars of our democratic school - that are a part of the experience at all levels from elementary school through high school.

All students participate in school meetings which are like town halls, made up of all the current staff and students in the school. This is a body in which every member gets one vote on every issue, be it a kindergartener or the director of the school. Since there are always more students than teachers in the community, this not only places real power in the hands of students, it gives the students a majority vote. This might sound scary to adults who are unfamiliar with

democratic schools, but the truth is, students take this responsibility extremely seriously. We believe Longview's School Meeting record of decisions compares favorably to elected bodies even at the highest level of our country's government.

All students, even the youngest, are assigned jobs within our community that help the community run effectively. These jobs are called clerkships and they allow students to engage in the real-world aspects of community life. For example, an elementary school member might have the job of taking the mail to the mailbox or watering the plants. At the middle school and high school levels, a student might help pay bills, organize and distribute supplies, support our social media venues, and serve on the leadership team for the whole school.

Life Together

Handling Discomfort and Conflict

At Longview, we expect students to struggle to act appropriately in classes and activities: that is just a typical part of growing up and adjusting to life in a school community. Since this is our expectation, we don't rush to punish students when they misbehave; instead, we try to teach them the skills they lack so that they are more likely to behave well in the future.

Elementary School

In the elementary school, we utilize the Conscious Discipline program developed by Dr. Becky Bailey. This is a program that teaches emotional intelligence; it is a relationship-based model of discipline. This program helps children change themselves. Instead of trying to force children to behave, our teachers have learned to change themselves in order to change the way students respond to them. The program helps children to develop positive relationships. Teachers leverage these positive relationships to support student growth and motivate behavior change and collaborative problem solving. The program also helps children and teachers see opportunities for growth in conflict, instead of seeing conflict as something negative.

Upper School

In the middle and high school, we utilize the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model developed by Dr. Ross Greene. This model is empirically supported and evidence-based. The model helps educators and others see concerning behaviors not as some deficit or problem, but rather as an indicator of the youth lacking a required skill to successfully meet an expectation. The approach engages students collaboratively to develop problem-solving skills and manage expectations so they can more effectively navigate difficult situations. Thus the CPS model is non-punitive and non-adversarial. It focuses on reducing conflict, enhancing relationships, improving communications, and other necessary problem solving skills.

Part of the larger philosophy

Conscious Discipline and Collaborative & Proactive Solutions are complementary systems which both speak to the larger Longview philosophy which is about seeing children and youth as complex, evolving beings who have many strengths and are continuously developing their skills and abilities.

When a child violates the norms of the school community in some way, there are many things that can happen depending on the nature of the infraction. Often this is handled through the mentor system where a mentor works with the student to come up with strategies to handle a situation differently in the future.

Sometimes there is a need for a more formal process of peer mediation where the goal is to come up with an agreement between the two parties. When a clear, written school rule is broken, students may also participate in the judicial system with our Judicial Committee, made up of students and teachers.

Throughout the process, students have the power. They have the power to develop better skills, manage expectations, and mediate issues to ensure that our school community remains one that is productive and welcoming for all students.

If my child needs extra help from a teacher, how can they get that support?

The opportunity to get extra help is always available in a small community like Longview School. Twice a day in the schedule, students have the opportunity to go to makeup work where they can get assistance from other educators and adults in the building. In addition, students often have a study skills class which is an opportunity to make up owed work, to look ahead at what's coming up, and to organize and prepare to effectively do one's assignments.

The easiest way to get extra help is for the student to approach their mentor or the teacher for direct help with something. It's best for parents to ask students to approach their mentors and teachers for this support, and parents can always reach out if they have a specific question as well.

Longview Routines and Procedures

What is a family conference?

Family conferences happen once each trimester. This is a conversation between the student and the teachers that families are witnesses to. It's not a traditional parent - teacher conference where the student is not present or on the sidelines. This is an opportunity for students to learn about their wins, to celebrate what has gone well, and to share about the goals achieved and the skills they have improved. Students are typically asked: What do you think went well? What do you think you could have worked on more?

These conferences begin with a larger group meeting where all teachers, students, and family members are present. Then, individual student conferences are scheduled with all teachers present. These conferences are about 20 minutes for each student, but more time can be scheduled as needed.

What is family work week?

The Longview community involves the whole family, so each year we have what is called family work week. At the end of the school year, families and students are invited to join the school staff in helping to create the space we want. In addition to regular maintenance and cleaning, it's also a chance to work on larger design projects where students provide the input.

While it's called family work week, typically it is about three days after the graduation and awards ceremony, and not a full week.

What do I do if my child is absent?

We are quite focused on having good lines of communication at Longview. In order to facilitate this, we ask that if your child(ren) will be late to or absent from school, that you email this information to absent@longviewschool.org. This email automatically goes to the entire staff so that teachers know your child(ren) will be absent. For upper school students, it is the responsibility of each child to find out what has been missed and to request make-up work from teachers.

How will I know if school is cancelled for snow or any other reason?

In general, Longview does whatever the Brewster schools do. So, if you listen to the radio and hear that the Brewster schools are closed or delayed, Longview will likely do the same (the exceptions are that sometimes we don't close earlier in the school day when the other schools close, and if the Brewster schools are closing because of a COVID-19 exposure or particular building issue, Longview would likely not do the same).

The easiest way to find out about a closure or delay is to check your email, as the Director will send a message by 6 AM letting you know about changes in the schedule. You could also call the school phone number (845-259-8259) any time after 6 AM and listen to the phone message. If there is a delay or a closing, it will

be on the message. Then, if we decide to go from a delay to a closing, we would add this to the message by 8:30 AM and send out an email update.