

**Subject:** A Stronger, More Impactful Approach to Student Representation on the Board of Education

Dear Board of Education Members,

We appreciate the effort to include student voices in board discussions, but before finalizing the [Student Ex-Officio Board Representative policy](#), we ask that you take a step back and consider whether the current approach truly gives students a meaningful seat at the table.

Right now, the policy limits student representation in a way that makes it feel more symbolic than substantive. We have a chance to do something better—to create a model where students aren't just invited to listen but are actually supported in contributing to the conversations that shape their education.

At the recent BOE info session, past trustees spoke about how much time and preparation goes into being ready for school board meetings—receiving a dense board packet on Friday, spending the weekend reviewing materials, and then discussing and making decisions on Tuesday evenings. That's a huge responsibility, even for adults with years of experience.

If we truly want student voices to be heard, we need to ensure they are given the tools, training, time, and support to engage meaningfully. This could include providing a packet of information and background on the policies being discussed (excluding sensitive topics like HR issues or settlements) to allow students to come to the table informed. If we want their contributions to be more than just symbolic, we must give them a real opportunity to prepare and participate effectively.

### **A Stronger Approach: A Student Coalition**

Instead of relying on a single student to represent an entire, diverse student body, we propose a more robust and inclusive model: a student coalition that spans 4th through 12th grades. By engaging a coalition of students from all three schools, we would create an opportunity for a wider range of perspectives, ensuring that students are genuinely engaged in decisions that shape their school experiences. A coalition would:

- **Provide the necessary support**—Students should not have to navigate the complexity of Board materials and policies alone. With proper support, such as a dedicated student packet and time to review before public sessions, students would be better equipped to contribute effectively.
- **Make participation truly meaningful**—Rather than merely sitting in meetings, students would work together, gathering input from their peers and actively bringing real issues to

the Board.

- **Ensure diverse representation**—Just as one adult cannot fully represent the perspectives and needs of an entire community, one student cannot authentically represent the diverse experiences of every grade and school. This is why we have five adult board members—each bringing a unique viewpoint. A student coalition would ensure that a broader range of voices is heard, allowing for more comprehensive representation across all schools and grade levels.
- **Provide continuity**—By building a rolling cohort of students, we ensure that knowledge and experience are passed down, so each new group of students is not starting from scratch.

We strongly urge you to reconsider the current policy and explore ways to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and impactful model for student representation. Our students are not just future leaders—they are engaged, thoughtful individuals with valuable insights to offer. Let's set them up for success and ensure their contributions are truly meaningful.

Thank you for your time, dedication, and commitment to the students of Ardsley. We look forward to seeing a policy that genuinely empowers them.