

How much is too much?


Avoiding micromanagement through board policy

2022 Board Leadership Institute
Kenna S. Haycox
senior policy consultant
Gamy Narvaez
policy consultant

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Session objectives

- Introduction to the task and the people
- The challenge: defining micromanagement
- Linking governance and administration through policy
- Red flags and next steps

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WHAT IS MICROMANAGEMENT

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Fuzzy, Unclear Roles Syndrome
(F.U.R.S.)

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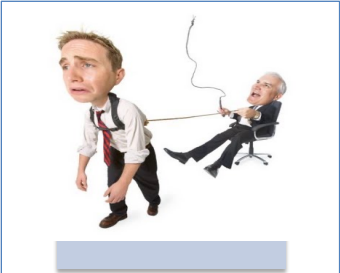
Your take on micromanagement?



To control with excessive attention to minor details




To direct or control in a detailed, often meddling manner.



A style of management that is characterized by an excessive need for control and extreme attention to even apparently trivial details."

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Let's look at an example

- Micromanagement in hiring
- What could go wrong?

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Black Cloud Local

- At Black Cloud, board members have always been part of the hiring committees when it comes to head coaches. That's just the way it's done around there!
- Two years ago, a new baseball coach was hired after being the unanimous pick of the committee. He was the toast of the town.

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Black Cloud Local

- Last month, two students reported that they had been sexually assaulted by the coach. He has been suspended while an investigation is conducted, but it doesn't look good.
- A reporter is asking questions about the process to hire him in the first place...

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Black Cloud Local

- This is an extreme case, but board members involved in the process should expect to be held accountable for their hiring decisions.
- The best practice for board members is keeping “hands off” of all hiring processes, trusting that those responsible for the supervision and management of employees are doing their jobs, and keeping all staff accountable for their responsibilities.

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WHAT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Good governance

- Understanding key differences between the roles of the board, superintendent, and treasurer is critical to good governance
- Bad governance occurs when these roles get blurred, and a board begins to take on duties that should have been delegated to the district administrative team

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The role of the board

- To adopt clear and concise policies that encourage the orderly administration of the district
- To hire key administrators for the district, namely the superintendent and treasurer
- To evaluate the work of key administrators, and the progress of district programs and curriculum
- To avoid making administrative decisions or second-guessing the administration

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The role of the superintendent

- To effectively implement policies adopted by the board at the district level
- To clearly communicate board policies and expectations to the district
- To clearly communicate recommendations to the board regarding policy in the district
- To avoid conflating the board's agenda with the superintendent's own agenda

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The role of the treasurer

- To effectively manage district finances and resources to achieve the best possible educational services
- To act as secretary to the board of education
- To advise both the board and superintendent regarding fiscal decisions
- To remain aware of new and pending legislation that affects school finance

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WHAT IS BOARD POLICY


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Policy	Guidelines/regulations	District-level policies/handbooks
<p><i>“The who, what and why”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets goals • Resolves issues • Defines and aligns administrative responsibilities • Establishes oversight and evaluation procedures 	<p><i>“The how”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports and implements board policy • Provides direction for administrative decisions and district procedures • Involves input of administrators 	<p><i>“Here’s how it’s done every day”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with board policies, how policies will be implemented in a practical manner • Provides detailed direction for daily operations • Written by the expert in that area • Gives administration greater flexibility for revision and implementation

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Defining board policy

- Board policies are:
 - The ideas that guide the direction of the district
 - The tools that bring about prudent change in the district
 - Communicated to the school community to outline the parameters within which the district operates
 - Created to provide leeway for administrative judgment and daily implementation

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Policy development process

1. Identification of need
2. Analysis of policy strategies
3. Selection of policy strategy
4. Policy drafting
5. Policy adoption
6. Policy implementation
7. Review and evaluation
8. Policy revision or removal

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Micromanagement in drafting

- An individual board member with an agenda

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Champion City Schools

- Champion City schools have been state football champions three of the last five years. The football games are well-attended, and the community is excited about the Champion City athletic programs.
- The minimum GPA required for participation in athletics is currently a 1.2.

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Champion City Schools

- Joe recently became a board member and his son, Phil, used to play football for the district. Everyone thought Joe's son had the talent to play at a Division I college.
- Phil kept the minimum 1.2 GPA and remained eligible to play for Champion City. However, when it came to recruitment time, the Division I schools weren't working out for Phil.
- When talking with a local Division I school, Phil found out it was his GPA that was affecting his initial eligibility.

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Champion City Schools

- Joe feels like the minimum GPA requirement of the district set his son up to fail. He is determined that the minimum GPA should be changed to 3.0.
- Joe recommends the revision, and the GPA minimum is raised to 3.0 at the same meeting it is proposed.

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Good governance or micromanagement?

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Micromanagement in implementation

- A board member with a desire to be involved in determining day-to-day procedures and “checking up” on whether procedures are being followed

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Anytown local school district's board policy states:

The board requires all students, grades kindergarten through 12, to recite the Pledge of Allegiance during the school day at a time and manner specified by the building principal.

The district is prohibited from preventing a teacher from having students recite the Pledge of Allegiance in the teacher's classroom.


In addition, district administrators, staff and students are prohibited from altering the wording of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The board recognizes that beliefs of some persons prohibit participation in the pledge, the salute to the United States flag or other opening exercises. Therefore, such persons are excused from participation.

The board prohibits the intimidation of any student by other students or staff aimed at coercing participation in reciting the pledge.

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Anytown Local Schools

- Sally recently became a board member and wants to know whether the Pledge of Allegiance is being recited daily. She feels this should be done at the beginning of each day, so she begins to show up in various buildings at the start of the school day.
- If the Pledge of Allegiance is not recited as the first item of the morning announcements, she is notifying the building principal that moving forward it must be the first item of the day since that is what the board states is required. She also notifies that principal that it must be recited by a different student each day.

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Good governance or micromanagement?

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School board and policy development

- The board's role is to:
 - Provide direction for where the district is and where the district hopes to be in the future
 - Build a consensus for the district's educational mission and philosophy
 - Protect the district from litigation
 - Involve appropriate stakeholders in the process
 - Allow district administrators and staff to implement policies through district level plans and procedures

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Superintendent and policy development

- The superintendent's role is to:
 - Keep the board informed of needed policy updates
 - Update handbooks to comply with new or revised policies
 - Communicate policies to appropriate stakeholders
 - Direct administrators in drafting district-level procedures based on board policy
 - Ensure district-level procedures are in line with overall board policies

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ALTERNATIVES TO POLICY

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Alternatives

- Board self-evaluation
- Ensuring that policies define who is responsible
- Good communication of policies
- Collective bargaining

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Board self-evaluation

- Just as boards of education expect a high level of performance from the district, stakeholders also expect the same from the board
- Boards should regularly compare individual assessments of board performance and evaluation overall board functioning

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Defining who is responsible

- Remember: good board governance requires clearly defining roles and responsibilities
- A board that cannot distinguish between its role and the role of district administration is more susceptible to micromanagement
- A board that micromanages district operations is less likely to remain focused on achieving the big picture goals of the district
- Policies lacking delegation of responsibility can lead to confusion on roles and responsibilities of board vs administrators

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Good communication

- Effective communication of board policies may require:
 - Making policies available in an easily accessible online format for all stakeholders
 - Highlighting specific policies in handbooks
 - Superintendent consistently communicating policies to the administration
 - Process for communicating updates to board policies after board adoption

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Collective bargaining

- Policy vs. collective bargaining agreements
- Collective bargaining agreements supersede board policies and handbooks
- Be cognizant of how state and federal laws and guidance affect policy

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RED FLAGS

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You might be micromanaging if...

- Your policies:
 - Reflect the objectives of one or two board members vs. the board as a whole
 - Are adopted based on one situation rather than long-term direction and mission
 - Contain excessive, detailed procedures
 - Do not have stakeholder input
 - Tie the hands of employees

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NEXT STEPS

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Essential questions – general governance

- Are board, superintendent and treasurer roles and responsibilities clearly defined?
- When was the last board self-evaluation?
- What process is in place for onboarding new board members on roles and responsibilities as a board member?
- Are there areas your board is micromanaging? If so, why? How can this be managed?
- Are appropriate evaluations in place for district operations, programs, and the superintendent and treasurer?
- Does your organizational chart accurately reflect roles and responsibilities?

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Essential questions – board policy

- When was the entire manual last reviewed?
- How are policies communicated to stakeholders?
- What is the policy adoption process?
- How do we ensure that policy changes will not put the district out of compliance?
- As a board member, who should I contact if I have questions about a policy or procedure?
- What is the process for stakeholder input in the policy development process?
- Is there a process to ensure district-level procedures are in line with board policy?
- Do policies delegate responsibility?

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 - Board-Superintendent Partnership
 - Board-Treasurer Partnership

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Connect with us!

Kenna S. Haycox

senior policy consultant

khaycox@ohioschoolboards.org

Gamy Narvaez

policy consultant

gnarvaez@ohioschoolboards.org

614-540-4000



Ohio School Boards Association



@Ohschoolboards



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