

EPISODE 302

# High Attention, Low Control: Professional Respect Without Micromanaging



INSTRUCTIONAL  
LEADERSHIP SHOW



# Essential Question



How can we pay enough attention to teachers' work without micromanaging and taking away they autonomy they need?

# Professional Work



- Teaching is professional work
- It requires the exercise of professional judgment under dynamic conditions of uncertainty
- Teachers cannot defer most decisions to anyone else
- Therefore, teachers need autonomy to do their jobs

# Autonomy vs. Alignment



- Teachers need autonomy to do their jobs, but...
- We also need alignment within a system:
  - Within a grade or course
  - From one grade/course to the next in sequence
  - From classroom to classroom
  - From school to school

# Constraints on Autonomy

- Courses & standards
- Student assignment
- Scope & sequence
- Pacing?



# Two Low-Attention Extremes



- Blind Neglect—completely leaving teachers alone
- Management by Mandate—giving too many orders

# The Wrong Kind of Attention

- Second-guessing
- Nitpicking
- Fake autonomy





**principal\_lamb**  2d ...

I haven't required faculty to submit lesson plans in 15 years for these two reasons:

1. Plans change day-to-day. Submitting for a week doesn't make sense.
2. I don't have time to read them.

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**txmomteacher2** 2d ...

Mine apparently has all the time in the world because I still have to turn them in. Even though we have a scripted curriculum and a scope and sequence that can't really be altered unless I close my door and alter away. Which does happen quite often. I did go on a short strike and did not do them for 3 weeks which got me a phone call and slightly chastised. With a scripted curriculum and a scope and sequence there should be no need for lesson plans. my objectives have been the same ones all year

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# Autonomy Matrix



	Low Attention	High Attention
Low Control	Blind Neglect	Professional Respect
High Control	Management by Mandate	Micro-Management

# Professional Respect



- Pay attention to teachers' work
- Give them what they need
- Ensure that any constraints on autonomy are legitimate
- Resolve any paradoxes of autonomy
- Build any teacher appreciation efforts on top of this

# 3 Roles



- **Directive**—telling teachers what to do, to change *behavior*
- **Reflective**—asking questions to prompt teacher *thinking*
- **Reflexive**—listening for ways to support teachers' working conditions

# Scenario: Low-Quality Curriculum



Which approach is likely to be most effective?

1. Tell teachers to fix the problems in the curriculum
2. Ask them to reflect on how they could improve it
3. Listen for what they're asking for?

# Article

## Differentiated Instructional Leadership: Developing Teacher Practice Through Autonomy



*Great teaching can't be micromanaged. Here's how to improve practice by developing teacher autonomy.*



by Justin Baeder, PhD



# Take The Challenge

