

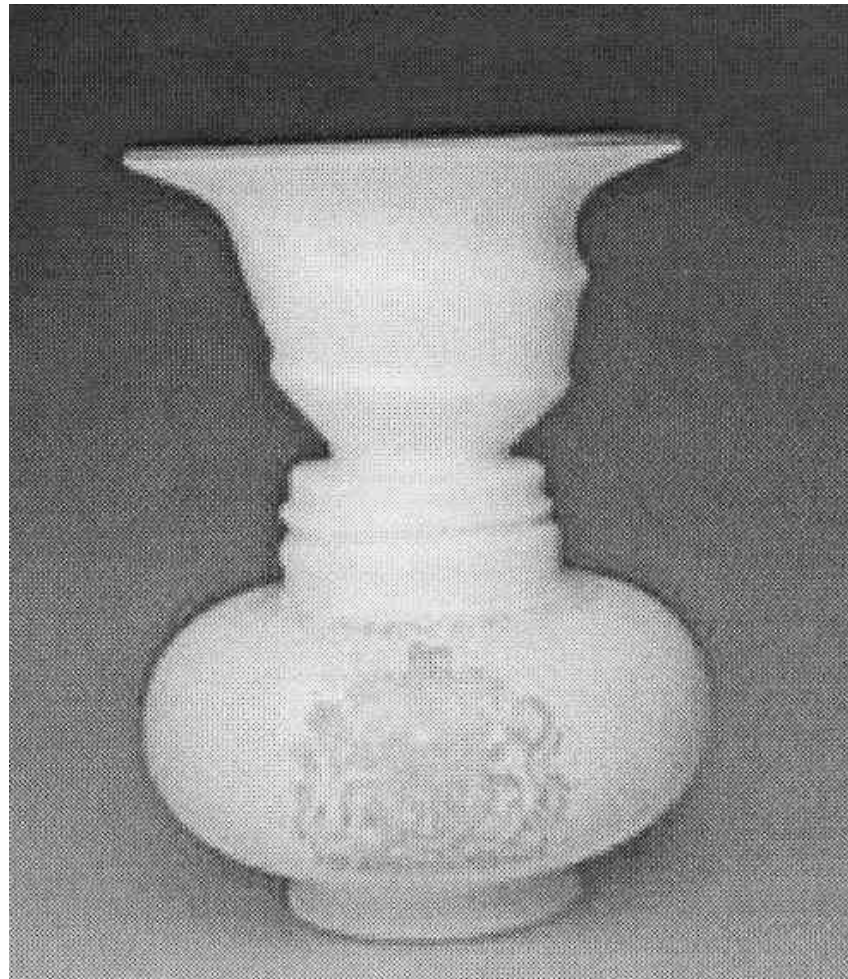
# **How Teachers Can Promote Students' Autonomy During Instruction: Lessons from a Decade of Research**

**Johnmarshall Reeve**

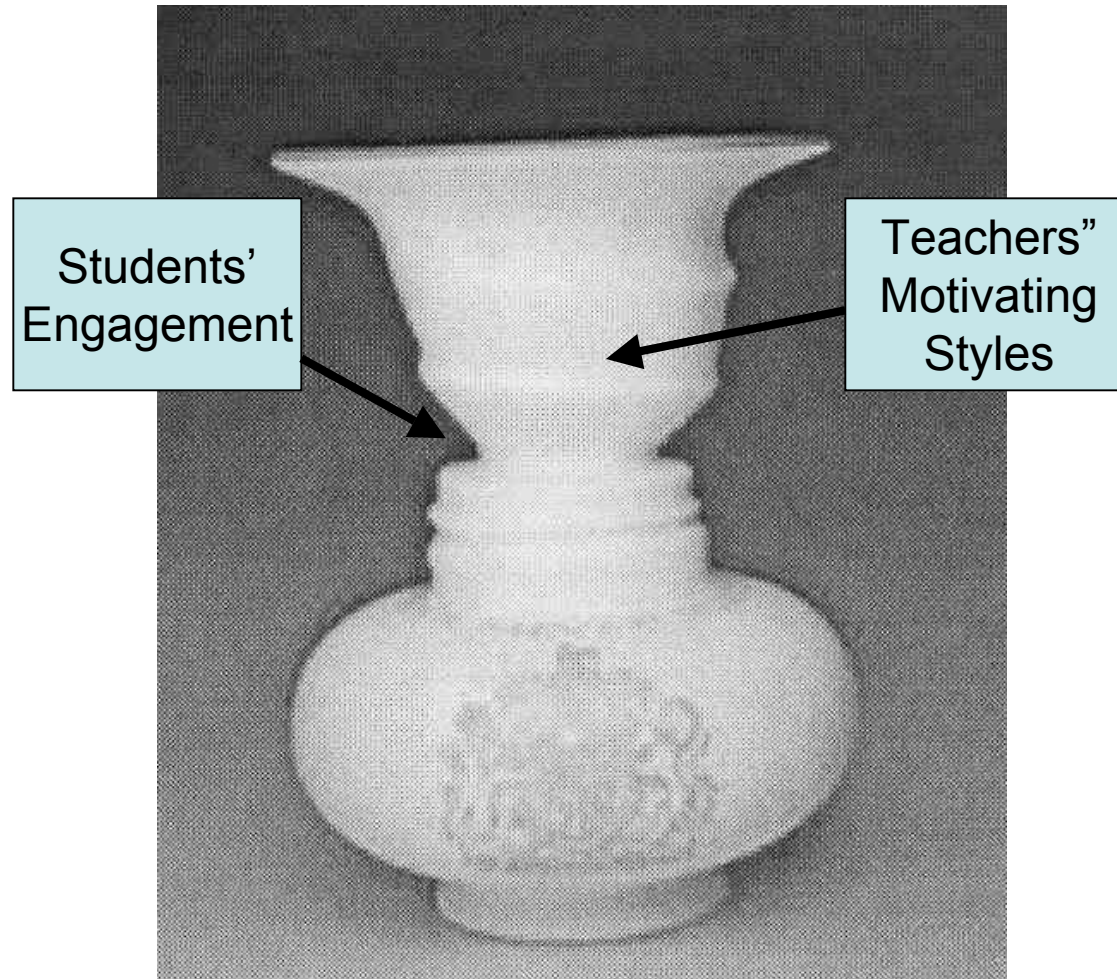
Department of Psychological & Quantitative Foundations  
University of Iowa

Iowa Educational Research and Evaluation Association  
2005 Annual Conference  
December 9, 2005  
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Which do you see, a vase or two faces?  
Which do you see, students' engagement or teachers'  
motivating styles?



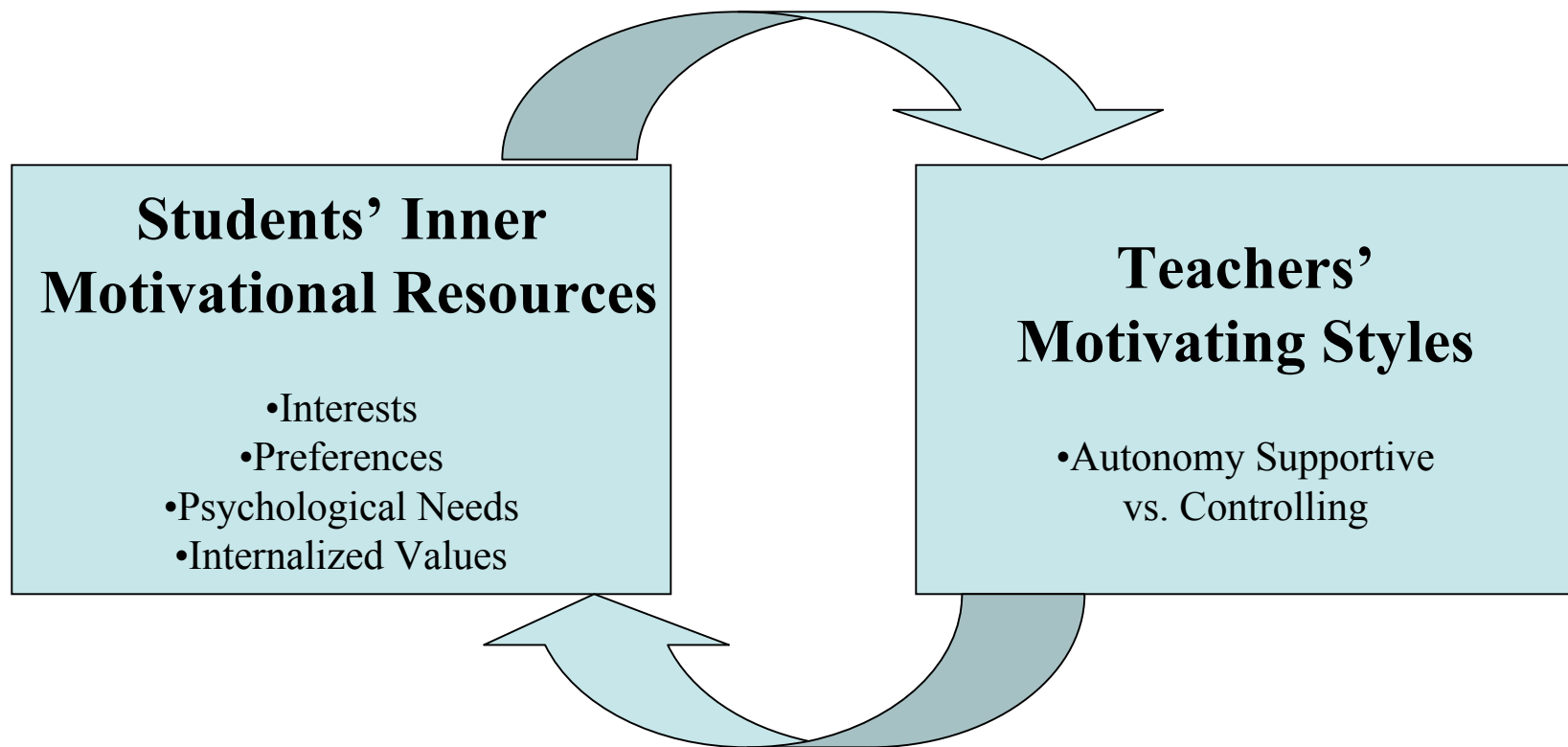
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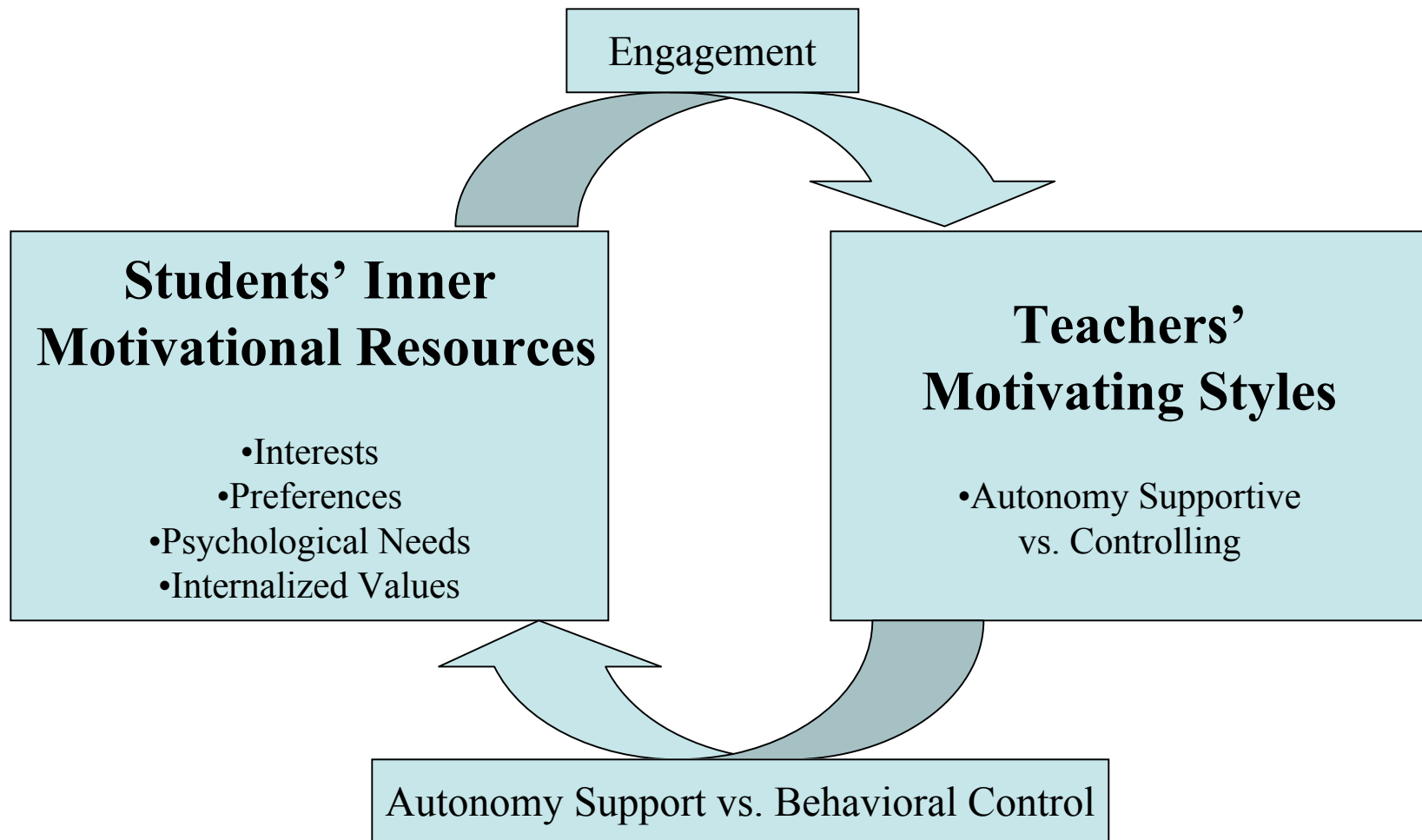
# Teachers' Motivating Styles and Students' Engagement

Teacher-Student Dialectic



Reeve, J., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Self-determination theory: A dialectical framework for understanding sociocultural influences on student motivation. In D. M. McInerney & S. Van Etten (Eds.), *Big theories revisited: Research on sociocultural influences on motivation and learning* (pp. 31-60). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

# Teachers' Motivating Styles and Students' Engagement



# Overview

## Understanding and Valuing

- Students' Engagement during Learning Activities
- Students' Autonomy
- Teachers' Autonomy-Supportive Motivating Style

## Supporting Students' Autonomy

- How? Why?
- Can Teachers Learn to Be More Autonomy Supportive?
- It's Not Autonomy Support or Structure, but Autonomy Support and Structure

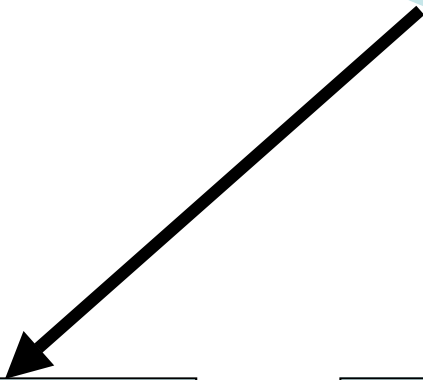
Extent of  
**Engagement**  
During a Learning Activity

**Engagement**

The behavioral intensity, emotional quality, and personal investment of a student's active involvement during a learning activity.



Extent of **Engagement**  
During a Learning Activity



**Behavior**

- Attention
- Effort
- Persistence

• **Attention**

Concentration and on-task focus.

• **Effort**

Investment of one's full measure of their capacities in what they are doing.

• **Persistence**

Investment of effort over time, even facing difficulties, setbacks.

Extent of **Engagement**  
During a Learning Activity

**Behavior**

- Attention
- Effort
- Persistence

**Emotion**

- Interest
- Enjoyment
- Enthusiasm

Behavioral engagement takes place within an emotional atmosphere of positive emotion: interest, enthusiasm, enjoyment, and a sense of *wanting to*.

Extent of **Engagement**  
During a Learning Activity

```
graph TD; A([Extent of Engagement During a Learning Activity]) --> B[Behavior]; A --> C[Emotion]; A --> D[Cognition]; E[Planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's work. Using sophisticated learning strategies: Elaborating, Summarizing, Rehearsing];
```

**Behavior**

- Attention
- Effort
- Persistence

**Emotion**

- Interest
- Enjoyment
- Enthusiasm

**Cognition**

- Personal Investment
- Preference for Challenge

Planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's work.

Using sophisticated learning strategies:

- Elaborating
- Summarizing
- Rehearsing

Extent of **Engagement**  
During a Learning Activity

An expression of the self during task involvement.

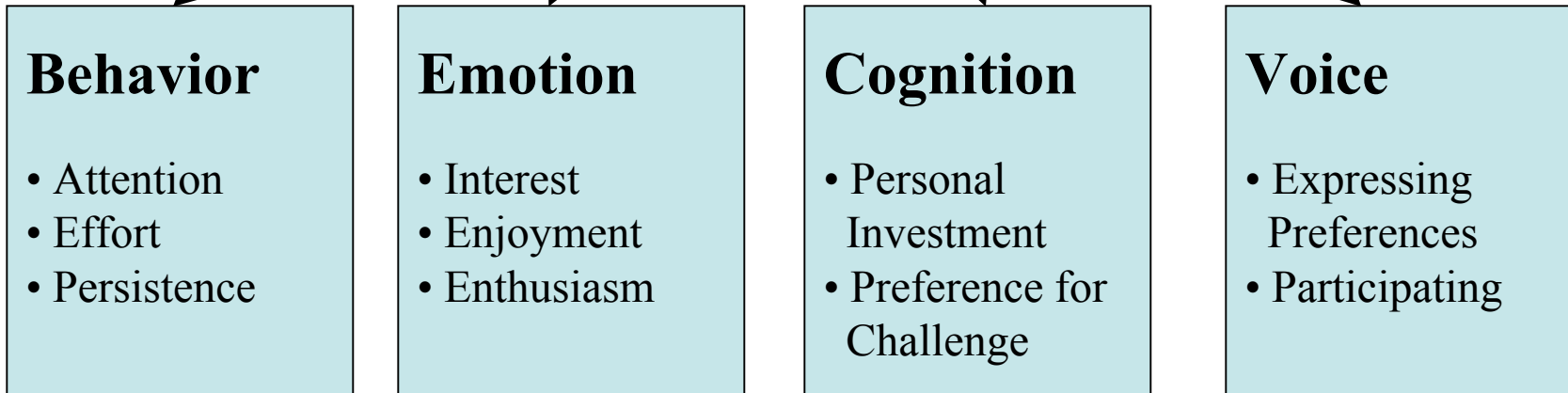
- Offer suggestions
- Recommend activities
- Express interests, preferences
- Participate in and contribute to class discussions
- Ask questions about what is being learned

Basically: Attempt to influence the flow of the class in a constructive way.

**Voice**

- Participation
- Expressing Preferences

Extent of **Engagement**  
During a Learning Activity



# Why Spend Time Talking about Engagement?

# Why Engagement is Important

## Four Reasons

### 1. Engagement makes learning possible.

The development of skills is practically impossible without attention, effort, persistence, positive emotion, commitment, and voice. Engagement is a prerequisite for a productive learning experience.

# Why Engagement is Important

1. Engagement makes learning possible.
2. **Engagement predicts school functioning.**  
Engagement predicts how well students fare in school, especially their achievement (grades, standardized test scores) and eventual completion of school (vs. dropping out).



# Why Engagement is Important

1. Engagement makes learning possible.
2. Engagement predicts school functioning.

3. **Engagement is malleable.**

Because engagement is malleable, it makes sense to give serious considerations to school-based interventions that aim to enhance students' engagement.

# Why Engagement is Important

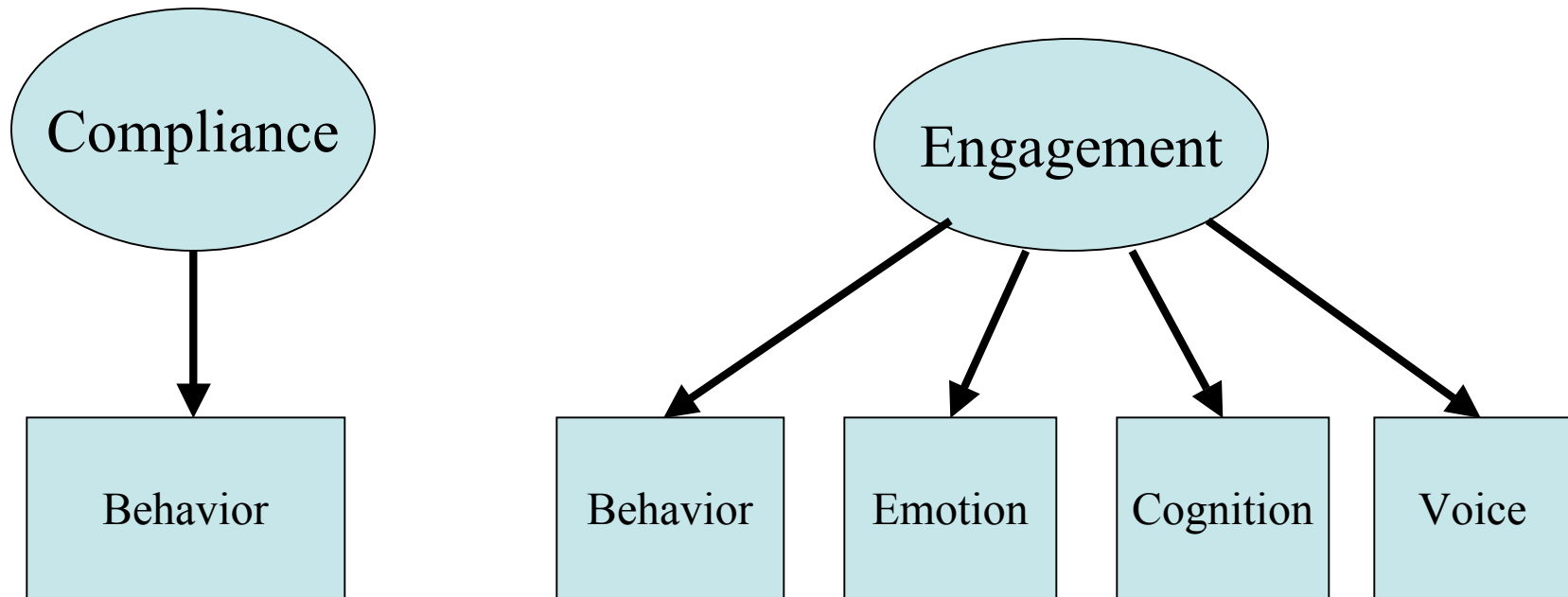
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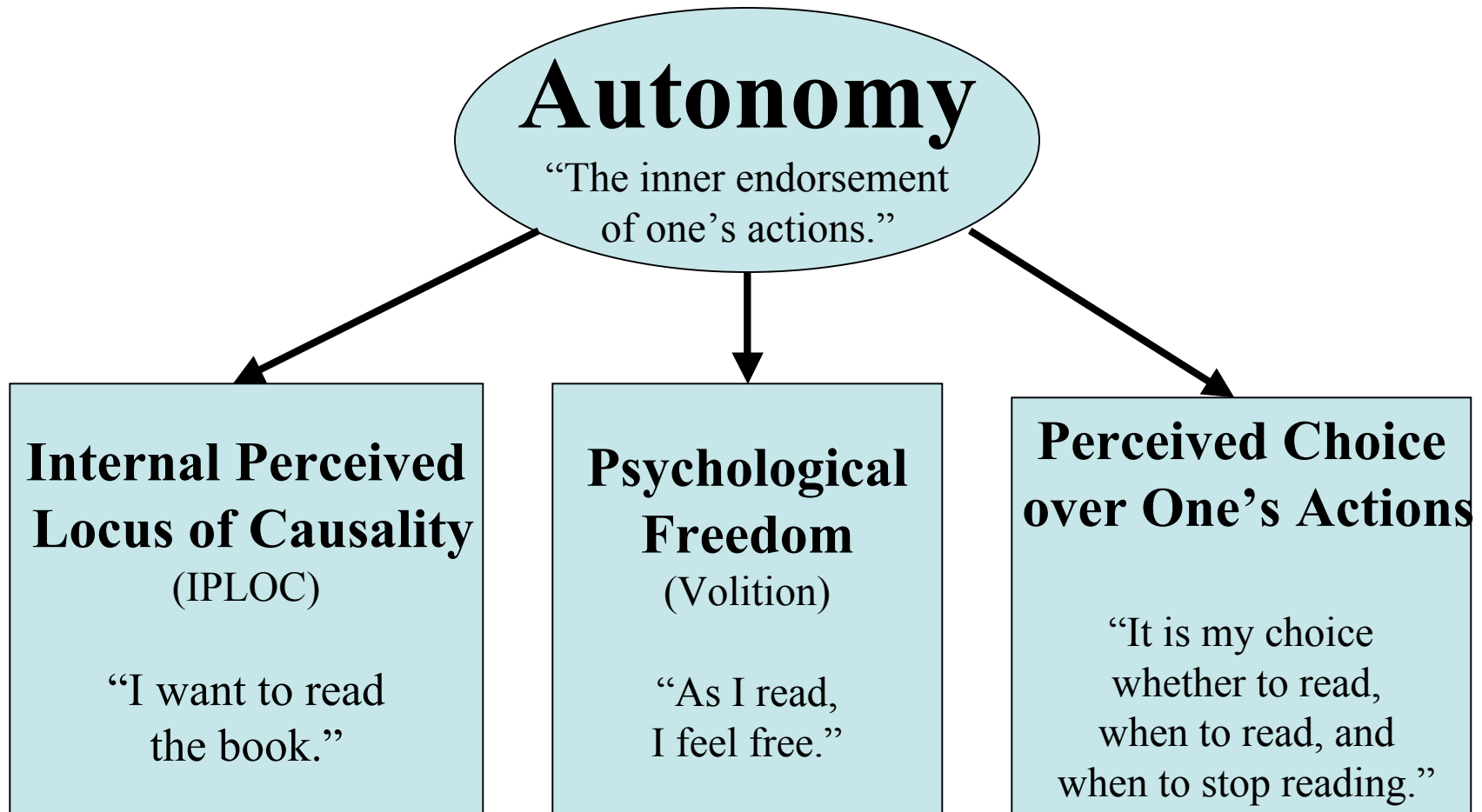
4. **Engagement gives teacher's feedback.**

Engagement gives teachers the moment-to-moment feedback they need to determine how well their efforts to motivate students are working.

High versus low engagement is telltale feedback about students' underlying motivation during the lesson.

# Compliance versus Engagement





*Source:* Reeve, J., Nix, G., & Hamm, D. (2003). The experience of self-determination in intrinsic motivation and the conundrum of choice. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*, 375-392.

# Do Students Benefit from High Autonomy?

Perceived autonomy correlates with a host of positive outcomes, including...

- Greater Engagement
- More Positive Emotionality
- Greater Conceptual Learning
- Preference for Optimal Challenge
- Greater School Retention (vs. Drop out)
- Higher Academic Achievement

# Do All Students *Need* Autonomy?

Yes, all students need and benefit from autonomy—the inner endorsement of their behavior, including

- Korean students with collectivistic values
- Students with special needs (e.g., MR).

# What makes a learning experience satisfying?

Mean Salience and Correlation with Positive Affect for the Satisfaction of Eight Candidate Needs Underlying a Positive, Satisfying Learning Experience

| Psychological Need              | Mean Salience | <i>r</i> with Positive Affect |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| High competence                 | 4.34 a        | .21*                          |
| High autonomy                   | 4.11 a, b     | .39*                          |
| High self-esteem                | 4.09 b        | .29*                          |
| High relatedness                | 4.07 a, b     | .27*                          |
| High stimulation                | 4.00 b        | .46*                          |
| High self-actualization-meaning | 3.72 c        | .38*                          |
| High safety-security            | 3.38 d        | .30*                          |
| High popularity-influence       | 3.17 e        | .36*                          |

*Note.* Means not sharing subscripts are significantly different from each other at  $p < .01$ . Means could range from 1 to 7.

\*  $p < .01$ .  $N = 144$ .

*Source:* Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2005). *What underlies a positive, satisfying learning experience for South Korean high school students*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

# What makes a learning experience unsatisfying?

Mean Salience and Correlation with Negative Affect for the Frustration of Eight Candidate Needs Underlying a Negative, Unsatisfying Learning Experience

| Psychological Need             | Mean Salience | <i>r</i> with Negative Affect |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Low autonomy                   | 3.91 a        | .23*                          |
| Low stimulation                | 3.89 a        | .24*                          |
| Low competence                 | 3.56 b        | .28*                          |
| Low self-actualization-meaning | 3.30 c        | .27*                          |
| Low self-esteem                | 3.19 c, d     | .48*                          |
| Low safety-security            | 3.11 c, d, e  | .42*                          |
| Low popularity-influence       | 3.03 d, e, f  | .40*                          |
| Low relatedness                | 2.77 f        | .33*                          |

*Note.* Means not sharing subscripts are significantly different from each other at  $p < .01$ . Means could range from 1 to 7.

\*  $p < .01$ .  $N = 134$ .

*Source:* Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2005). *What underlies a positive, satisfying learning experience for South Korean high school students*. Manuscript submitted for publication.



# Autonomy Support: 4 Dimensions

(Supporting students' autonomy during learning activities;  
Supporting students' intrinsic motivation & internalization)

- Nurtures inner motivational resources
- Relies on informational language
- Promotes valuing
- Acknowledges and accepts negative affect as valid reaction to constraints

# Nurture Inner Motivational Resources

Motivational Problem: **Initiating students' classroom engagement.**

versus

Build instructional activities  
around students...

- Interests
- Enjoyment
- Sense of Being Challenged
- Preferences
- Choice-Making

Rely on external regulators,  
such as...

- Incentives
- Consequences (Rewards)
- Directives
- Assignments
- Compliance Requests

# Rely on Informational Language

Motivational Problem: **Respond to students' motivational problems**  
(e.g., listlessness, poor performance).

versus

Communicate classroom requirements and opportunities through messages that are...

- Noncontrolling
- Informational
- Flexible

Communicate classroom requirements and opportunities through messages that are...

- Pressuring
- Critical
- Rigid

# Promote Valuing

Motivational Problem: **Motivating students on uninteresting** (but important) **lessons**.

When asking students to engage in a requested activity, behavior, or procedure...

versus

Provide rationales to explain  
the lesson's...

- Utility (Use)
- Importance
- Value, Meaning
- Hidden Value

Neglect to communicate what  
it is about this lesson that  
makes it worthwhile—that  
justifies students'  
investment of effort.

# Acknowledge and Accept Expressions of Negative Affect

Motivational Problem: Inevitable conflict between what teachers want students to do and what students want students to do.

versus

Acknowledge and accept such feelings and resistance as a valid reaction to the teacher's constraints, demands, and imposed structures.

Counter students' negative affect, arguing that such "attitude" is unacceptable—something that needs to be changed, fixed, or reversed into a more acceptance attitude.

- Can teachers learn to be more autonomy-supportive toward their students?

- Can teachers learn to be more autonomy-supportive toward their students?
- Can veteran teachers learn to expand their existing motivating styles to incorporate a greater use of autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors during their instruction?

# Results

(Teachers' Autonomy-Supportive Behaviors during 2<sup>nd</sup> Classroom Observation)

| Instructional Behavior                                   | Control Group  | Experimental Group | ANCOVA $F(1, 17)$ |
|--|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Nurtures inner motivational resources                    | 3.05<br>(1.35) | 5.36<br>(1.44)     | 7.79*             |
| Relies on informational language                         | 2.69<br>(1.32) | 5.22<br>(1.43)     | 12.44*            |
| Promotes valuing   | 1.86<br>(1.12) | 3.32<br>(1.54)     | 4.74*             |
| Acknowledges and accepts negative affect as okay         | 3.28<br>(0.95) | 5.13<br>(1.11)     | 11.00*            |
| Adjusted Mean score in blue.<br>Possible range = 1 to 7. |                |                    |                   |

Source: Reeve, J., Jang, H., Carrell, D., Barch, J., & Jeon, S. (2004).  
Enhancing students' engagement by increasing teachers' autonomy support.  
*Motivation and Emotion*, 28, 147-169.



# Relationship between Teacher-Provided Autonomy Support and Structure

- What Is Structure?
- How Does Structure Relate to Autonomy Support?

# Teacher-Provided Provision of Structure

## *To get students' started...*

- Directions
- Goals
- Incentives
- Schedule of Events
- Standards
- Challenges

## *To keep them going...*

- Reminders
- Encouragements
- Prompts
- Modeling
- Suggestions
- Praise

## *To finish them up...*

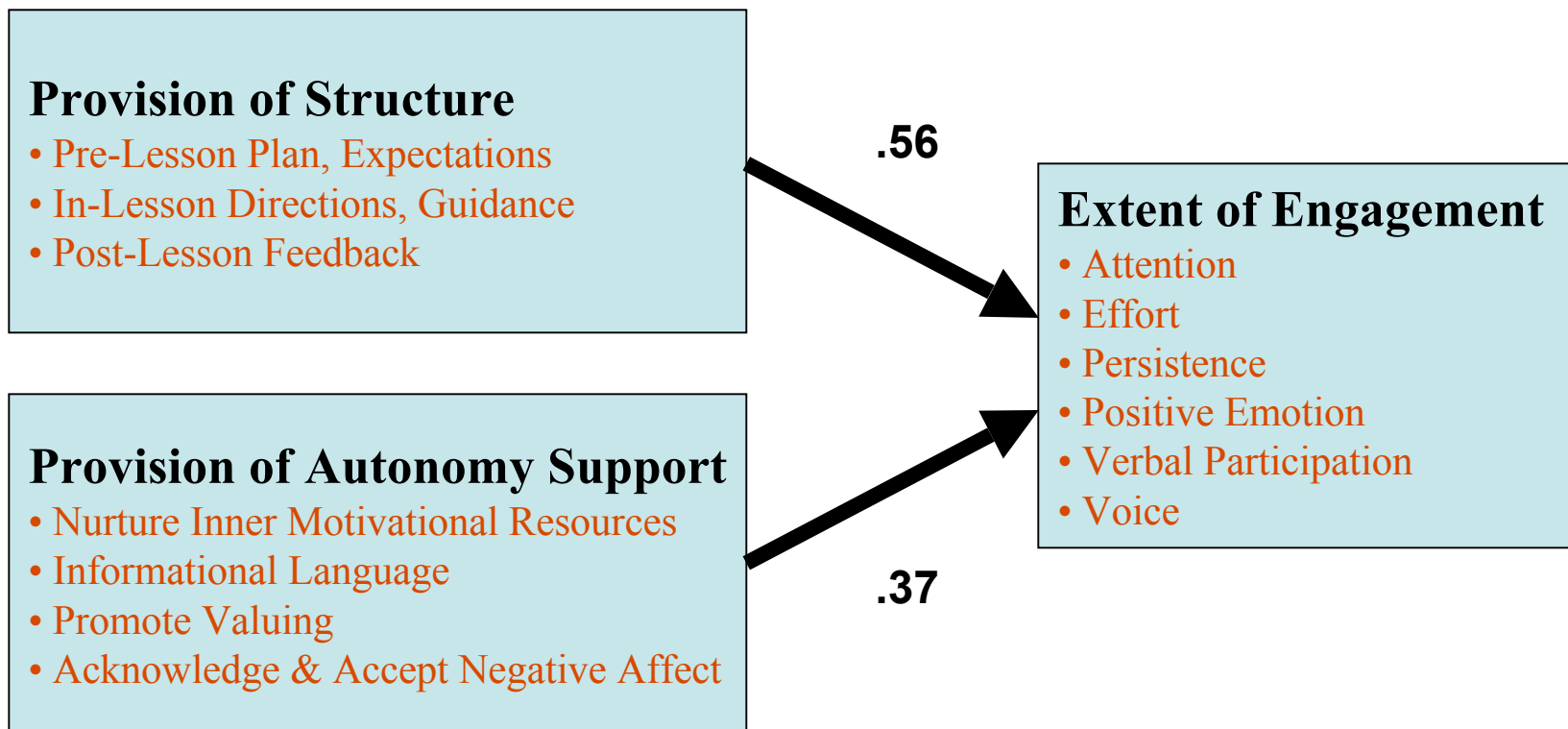
- Rewards
- Feedback
- Posttask Analysis  
(Strengths/Weaknesses)
- Suggestions for Next  
Time

Based on:

Reeve, J. (2005). Extrinsic rewards and inner motivation. In Weinstein, C, & Good, T. (Eds.).

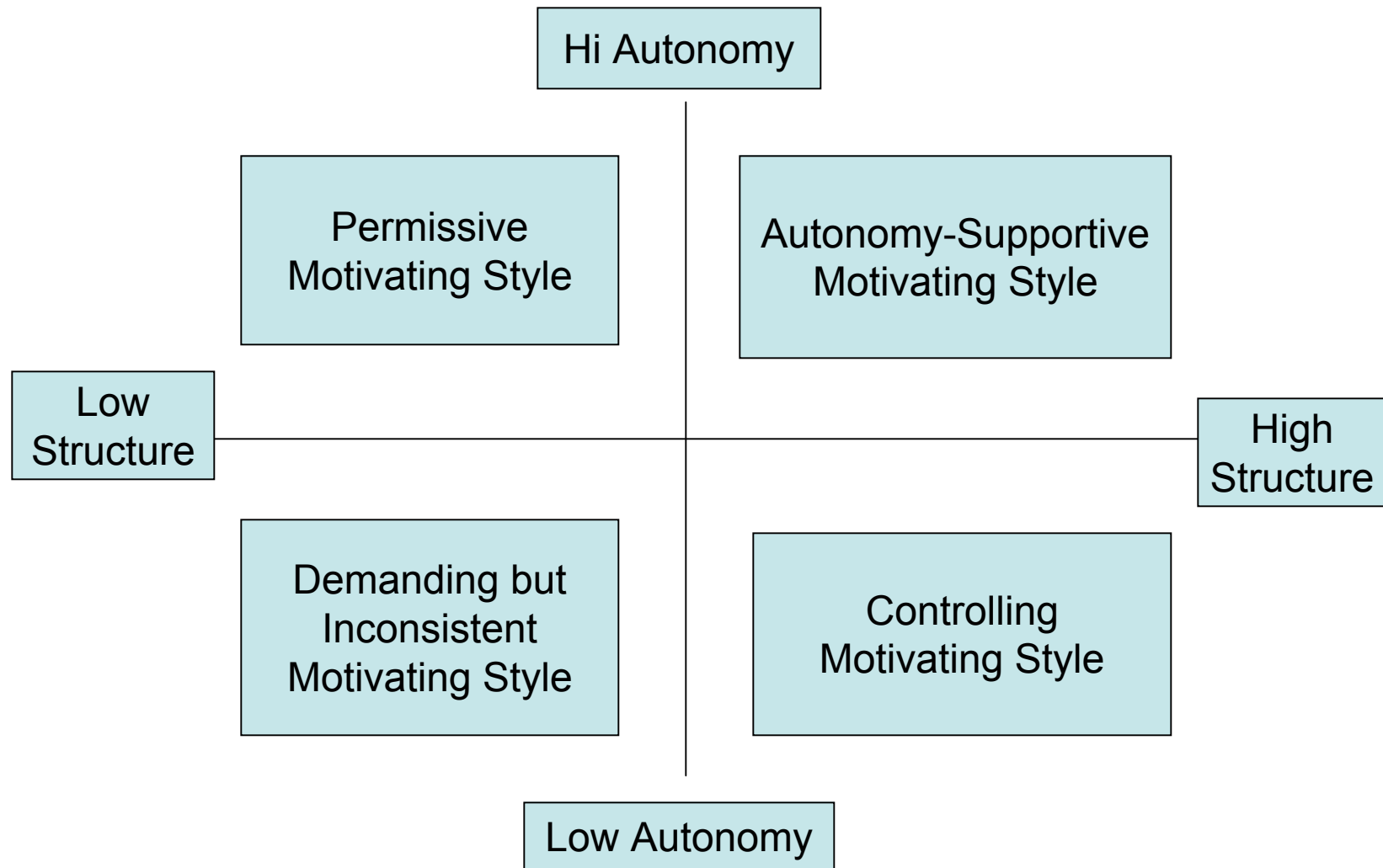
*Handbook of classroom management* (Chpt. 24, pp. 645-664). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

# How Structure and Autonomy Support Both Contribute to Students' Engagement

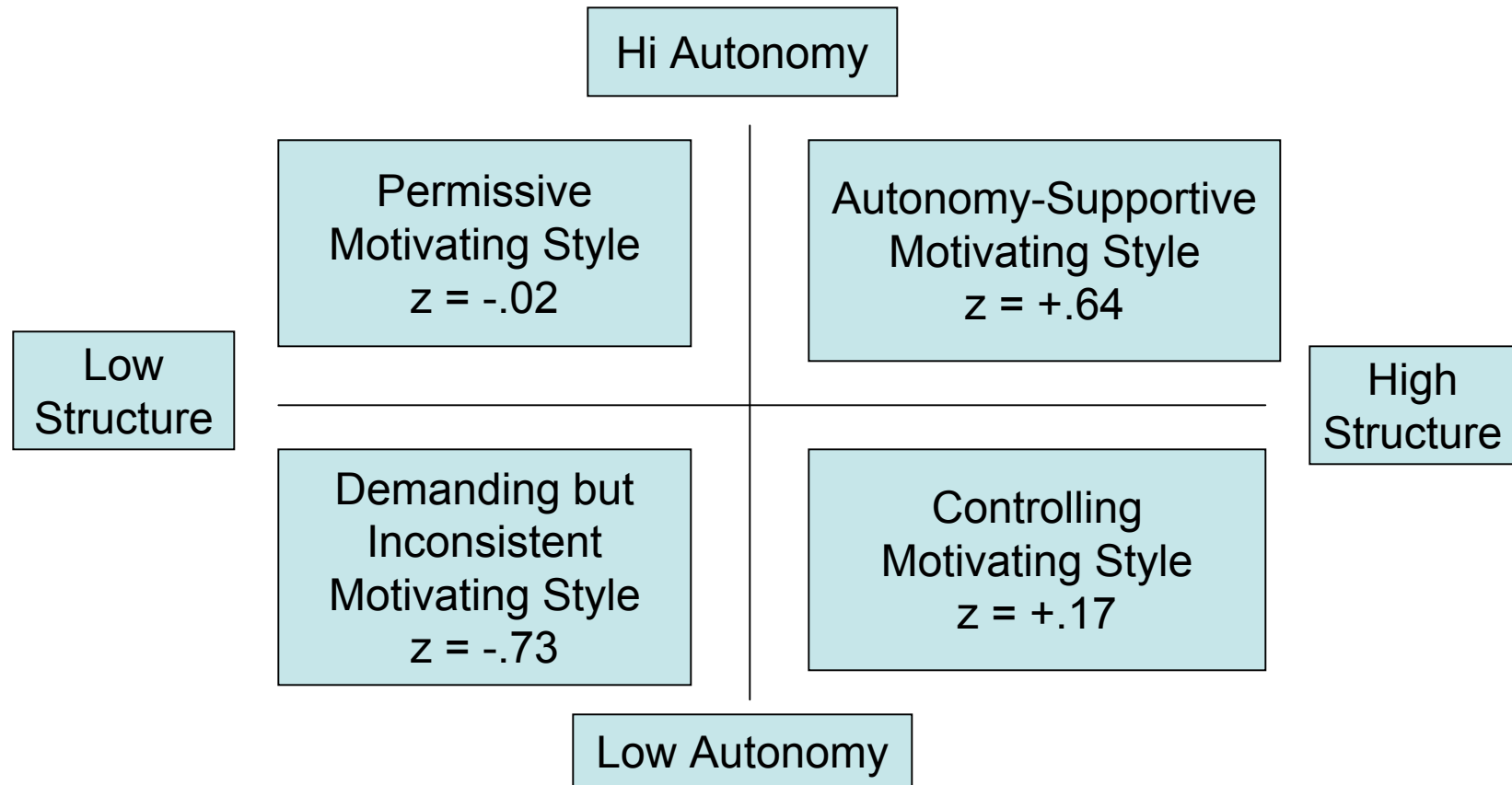


Source: Jang, H., & Reeve, J. (2005). *Engaging students in learning: It's not autonomy support or structure, but autonomy support and structure*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

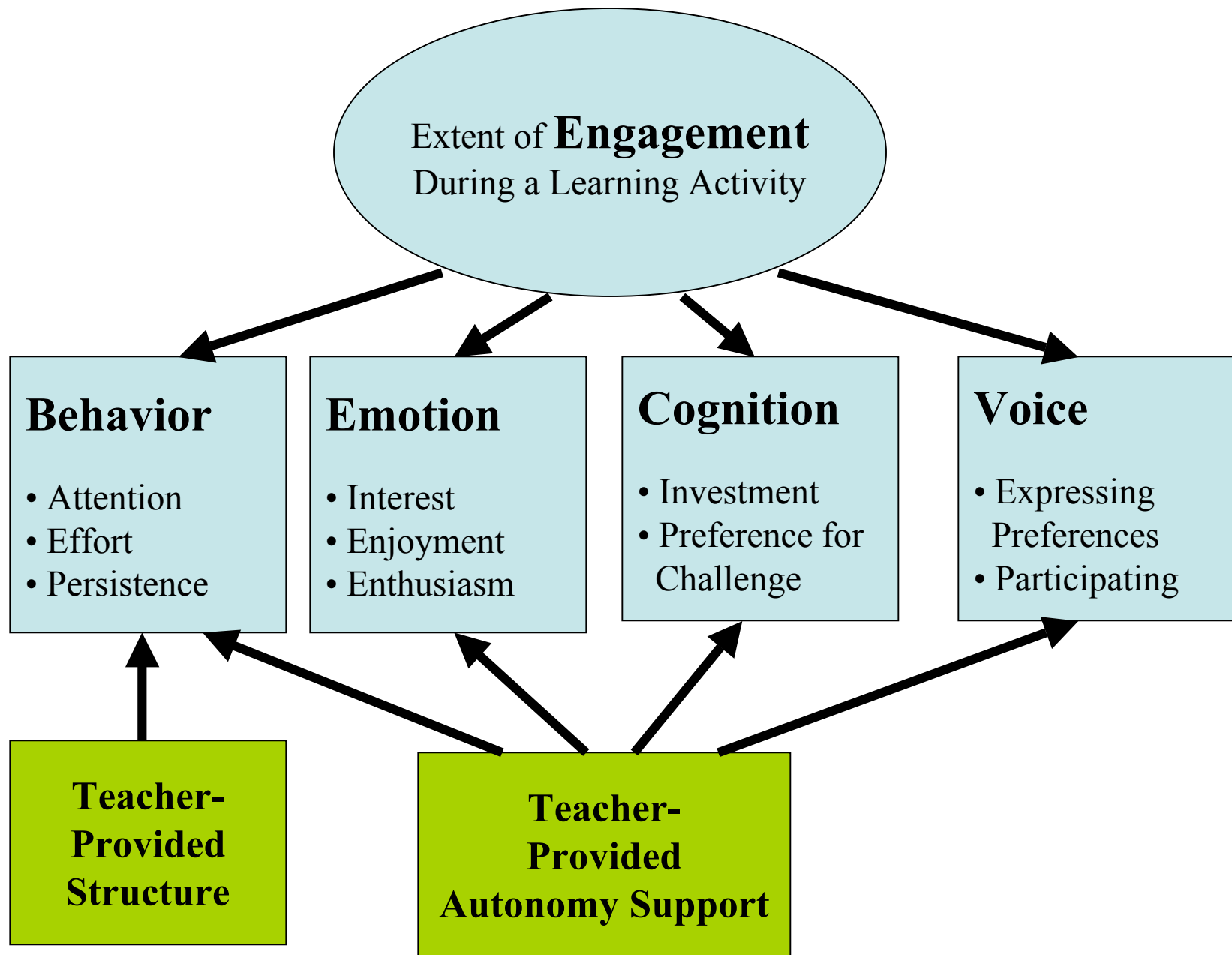
## 2 (Autonomy) x 2 (Structure) Framework



# Student Engagement Scores (z-scores) from 122 Milwaukee High School Teachers



Source: Jang, H., & Reeve, J. (2005). *Engaging students in learning: It's not autonomy support or structure, but autonomy support and structure*. Manuscript submitted for publication.



# Conclusions

1. We know what autonomy is, and how students benefit from it.
2. We know what autonomy support is and how teachers do it.
3. We know that teachers *can* learn to become more autonomy supportive.
4. We know that when teachers enact autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors, their students show a strong, immediate, and positive engagement effect.
5. And, we know that teachers don't need to choose between autonomy and structure but, instead, more of both is better.