Learning to perform music can be a very enjoyable, satisfying, and meaningful undertaking. It offers students an inherently challenging activity and the opportunity to experience a continual supply of feedback, which in optimal conditions enriches their sense of competence. It gives students an avenue to express their talents, passions, and creativity. It is also a rare educational opportunity for students to learn to enjoy an activity truly for its own sake—simply for the pleasure and spontaneous sense of satisfaction it provides, and it does so often within the companionship of one’s friends. Still further, learning music offers a rare opportunity to engage in a lifelong activity that can open up future opportunities for increasing skill development and ever-expanding opportunities for stylistic specialization and collaboration with peers (Sosniak, 1990). For these reasons, many students say that learning to perform music is an inherently interesting and enjoyable thing to do.

While performing music can be highly engaging and personally satisfying, many pedagogues and researchers have documented that the reverse is often the case—namely, the steady decline in young people’s musical participation and engagement throughout their school years. Various explanations have been posited for this decline, such as students’ perceptions that they are insufficiently competent or that they have lost their intrinsic motivation (Hallam, 1998; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In the lives of many music students, practicing may take on a role akin to a homework-like task: a daily chore to be completed alongside many others,
often under the surveillance of parents (McPherson & Renwick, 2011). While teachers, students, and parents often negotiate the extent to which the music lesson focuses on work-like preprofessional training or on enjoying the activity for its own sake (Davidson & Jordan, 2007), the trend too often observed in music classrooms around the world is one of declining, not rising, interest and enjoyment.

Walking through the doors of a music classroom, a student may enter with a strong sense of curiosity, mastery motivation, vitality, and eager self-motivation, or that same student might enter with apathy, anxiety, and only a blank lifeless stare out the window. As with other school subjects, music students can be motivated and engaged, or they can be unmotivated and disengaged. Such reactions reflect more than just individual differences between students, as they are also reactions to the social environment and classroom climate in which music education takes place. A social context—be it the classroom or a tutor-tutee relationship—can vitalize and nurture students’ inner motivational resources, resulting in enthusiastic engagement, or it can neglect and frustrate students’ inner motivational resources, resulting in alienation and disaffection. A theory of student motivation that is especially well suited to explain such engagement versus disaffection is self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and we focus our chapter on this perspective in order to introduce its insights to the music education community.

**Self-Determination Theory**

This is an approach to student engagement that uses traditional empirical methods to highlight the key role of students’ inner motivational resources in facilitating their positive classroom functioning, such as their engagement, learning, and achievement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Much of the research guided by SDT emphasizes the motivational underpinnings of students’ positive functioning, and we will emphasize both intrinsic motivation and internalized valuing in this chapter. Other research guided by SDT emphasizes the role that social and environmental factors play in either promoting and vitalizing student motivation or in thwarting and undermining it, and we will emphasize the music teacher’s motivating style as a key social influence on students’ motivation and engagement.

In the empirical study of motivation, SDT highlights the inherent and acquired motivational resources that facilitate students’ positive classroom functioning. The prototype of students’ natural motivation is intrinsic motivation, which is “the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one’s capacities, to explore, and to learn” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). It is through intrinsic motivation that a child engages in a piece of music because it makes her feel happy, because she likes the sound of the chord changes, or because she enjoys
the connection she feels between her breath control and an expressive *diminuendo*. All aspects of music learning cannot be expected to be intrinsically interesting, however, so SDT researchers further study how people developmentally internalize the motivation they need to carry out behavior that is not intrinsically motivated. It is through internalized extrinsic motivation that a child or adolescent engages and persists in activities that are socially valued but personally uninteresting, such as following rules, practicing the same music over and over, and doing what is important rather than what is fun. Hence, in addition to a focus on supporting students’ intrinsic motivation, this chapter will focus on developing students’ internalization of extrinsic motivation.

**Intrinsic Motivation**

Despite the fact that all music students enter the classroom with intrinsic motivational tendencies, it is clear that they do not all walk out with their intrinsic motivation intact. For its maintenance and enhancement, intrinsic motivation requires supportive conditions (Deci & Ryan, 1985); accordingly, SDT focuses on the environmental factors that can sometimes nurture and support, but other times suppress and undermine, students’ natural tendency to learn and explore the world with autonomy. Some environmental factors that generally maintain and enhance intrinsic motivation include the provision of optimal challenges, opportunities for self-direction, acknowledgment of feelings, and positive feedback; some environmental factors that generally frustrate and undermine intrinsic motivation include deadlines, threats of punishment, competition, surveillance, and external evaluation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

A central tenet of SDT is that intrinsic motivation will be enhanced by conditions that support people’s experience of being autonomous and competent, while it will be undermined by conditions that reduce or frustrate people’s experience of autonomy and competence. An example of how a student might express high intrinsic motivation during a music lesson would be to show a high and enduring level of interest, to seek out and find pleasure in optimal challenges, and to say things such as “This is fun.” Educational practices that provide opportunities for self-direction, optimal challenges, and positive feedback typically enhance intrinsic motivation. An example of how a student might express low intrinsic motivation during the same music lesson would be to show listlessness, to avoid challenges, and to say things such as, “I can’t do it.” Hence, conditions that lead people to feel lesser autonomy and competence will typically undermine intrinsic motivation. This explains why educational practices such as deadlines, threats of punishment, competition, surveillance, and external evaluation typically decrease intrinsic motivation.
INTERNALIZATION AND INTEGRATION

Although intrinsic motivation is an important type of motivation, it is not the only type of autonomous motivation students have. Students can also be extrinsically motivated, and Ryan and Deci (2000) propose that extrinsically motivated behavior lies along a continuum (see Figure 1.8.1) according to the extent to which it is perceived as autonomous or self-determined. The central four panels of figure 1.8.1 depict this more fine-grained, continuous conception of extrinsic motivation. At one end is **external regulation**, where a person acts simply to gain a reward or to avoid punishment. A slightly more internalized form of regulation is called **introjection**, where people have partly taken in external controls but control themselves through pressure-inducing dynamics such as contingent self-esteem, anxiety, and guilt. An autonomous and internalized type of extrinsically motivated behavior is **identified regulation**. Here, a conscious valuing of the activity occurs, as in "While this activity is not fun, it is important and valuable to me." Various activities regulated through identification may nevertheless remain compartmentalized, however, and SDT proposes that the developmental internalization process can continue to a state of **integrated regulation**, where the various identifications are brought together into congruence with each other and one's sense of self. With young musicians, for instance, this may involve reconciling the huge time demands of skill development with other competing goals, such as academic and social activities (Austin, Renwick, & McPherson, 2006).
Of course, a person might not be motivated to pursue an activity in any way—either intrinsic or extrinsic. At one extreme, figure 1.8.1 shows amotivation, a state where people are totally disengaged from an activity, consider themselves low in competence for that activity, and see a lack of any relationship between their actions and environmental outcomes. This is the polar opposite of intrinsic motivation, where a person engages in an activity solely for its own inherent satisfactions, and out of interest and enjoyment.

Extrinsic motivation becomes autonomous when students wholeheartedly internalize into the self-system a socially prescribed way of thinking or behaving (e.g., a value for practicing a musical instrument, a personal goal to win a state competition). Students might express a self-endorsed goal during music instruction through a high and enduring level of commitment and valuing of what they are doing. Hence, conditions that allow students to feel greater autonomy, valuing, or self-endorsement of the goal are likely to assist the process of motivational internalization.

How music teachers can do this is the topic of the next section, on teachers’ motivating styles. But before introducing this key topic, consider one experiment that illustrates many of the concepts highlighted throughout the chapter—long-term adherence and persistence in the activity, intrinsic motivation, types of extrinsic motivation, and motivating style. The experiment focused on persistence within a specific skill domain, which is a crucial issue in music education because it is an elective course and because too many students drop out of music education in early adolescence. In this study, Pelletier and colleagues (2001) investigated the effects of athletic coaches’ motivating style (autonomy support and controlling) on competitive swimmers’ long-term persistence. The effect that motivating style had on persistence was hypothesized to be mediated by the five types of motivation introduced in figure 1.8.1. Persistence was measured by swimmers’ continued participation (versus dropout) after 10 months (Persistence in Season 1) and then again after 22 months (Persistence in Season 2). Results are summarized in figure 1.8.2. What is important to note about these findings is, first, the close connection between the coaches’ motivating style and the swimmers’ motivations, and second, the close connection between the swimmers’ motivational orientations and their choices regarding persistence. Specifically, when coaches were autonomy supportive, the swimmers’ intrinsic motivation and identified regulation both increased substantially. Alternatively, when coaches were controlling, the swimmers’ dysfunctional motivations—external regulation and amotivation—increased substantially. These changes in motivation throughout the season were important, as intrinsic motivation and identified regulation clearly facilitated long-term persistence, whereas external regulation and amotivation clearly undermined it. With a little imagination, perhaps the reader can see some striking parallels between the changing motivations and outcomes of these swimmers and the changing motivations and outcomes music teachers witness in their classrooms year after year.
Figure 1.8.2: The Pelletier et al. (2001, p. 296) Model of the Influence of Coaches’ Interpersonal Behaviors on Athletes’ Forms of Regulation and Persistence (adapted with permission).

**Autonomy Support**

Autonomy support exists as a variety of behaviors teachers enact to enhance students’ feelings of freedom, of choice, and their sense that they are the origin of their own behavior—that is, students’ experience of autonomy. Formally, autonomy support is the interpersonal sentiment and behavior that teachers provide to identify, nurture, and develop students’ inner motivational resources (Reeve, 2009). Its opposite is behavioral control—behaviors teachers enact during instruction to suppress students’ experience of autonomy. More specifically, controlling is the interpersonal sentiment and behaviors that teachers provide to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way—“think this way; don’t feel like that; and do this but don’t do that” (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). As opposites, autonomy support and controlling represent a single bipolar continuum to conceptualize the quality of a teacher’s motivating style toward students (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981). A teacher’s motivating style is an important construct because it predicts students’ educational and developmental outcomes, such that students of autonomy-supportive teachers relatively thrive in terms of their learning, engagement, and well-being, while teachers of controlling teachers relatively suffer on the same student outcomes (Reeve & Jang, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000).
Recognizing the influence that a teacher's motivating style has on students' classroom functioning, many researchers have worked hard to specify exactly what autonomy-supportive and controlling teachers do during instruction. Once understood, teacher training intervention programs have been developed to help teachers become more autonomy supportive toward their students. In this section, we will identify precisely what autonomy-supportive and controlling teachers say and do during instruction, and then we will summarize the benefits to students when teachers are trained to be more autonomy supportive.

What Autonomy-Supportive Teachers Say and Do

Many instructional behaviors have been validated as autonomy-supportive acts of instruction (e.g., Reeve & Jang, 2006). These instructional behaviors can be organized into five clusters of autonomy support (for reviews, see Reeve, 2009; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004):

1. Autonomy-supportive teachers spark students' initial engagement in learning activities by nurturing their inner motivational resources. For instance, a musical instructor might introduce a difficult piece of music saying, "Here is a challenge; here is a piece of music that will challenge your skills."

2. Autonomy-supportive teachers provide a steady stream of rationales to explain the why behind any potentially uninteresting endeavor. For instance, a music instructor might say, "Okay, playing the same piece of music over and over tends to get boring, but the reason for the repetition is to make gradual little refinements each time until, in the end, you have mastered the piece of music."

3. Autonomy-supportive teachers rely on noncontrolling and informational language when they communicate requirements, comment on student progress, ask students to take responsibility for their learning, and address motivational and behavioral problems. For instance, a music instructor might say, "I don't hear much progress; do you know why that might be?"

4. Autonomy-supportive teachers display patience to allow time for self-paced learning to occur. To display patience, the music teacher would take the time to listen to students, provide time for them to work in their own way, offer hints when students seem stuck, and postpone advice until they first understood what the student was trying to accomplish.

5. Autonomy-supportive teachers acknowledge and accept students' expressions of resistance and negative emotions. For instance, after a student complains that a procedure is too boring or too hard, a music teacher might say, "Yes, this is hard; it can make anyone feel frustrated. What could we do differently so it didn't seem so boring or difficult; any suggestions?"
What Controlling Teachers Say and Do

Autonomy-supportive teachers enhance students' autonomy, while controlling teachers neglect and frustrate this fundamental psychological need. For each autonomy-supportive instructional behavior, its opposite can be identified:

1. Controlling teachers try to spark students' initial engagement in learning activities through directives, assignments, incentives, or compliance requests. That is, they neglect or bypass the opportunity to vitalize students' inner motivational resources and, instead, introduce some sort of (often artificial) source of environmental motivation (e.g., directive, deadline, incentive).

2. Controlling teachers are notably silent when it comes to providing explanatory rationales for their requested activities, rules, and procedures. Again, they bypass the opportunity to develop students' inner motivational resources (internalization and valuing, in this case) and instead simply push for students' behavioral compliance.

3. Controlling teachers rely on pressuring language. By using pressuring language (e.g., "You should," "You have to," "You've got to"), controlling teachers tend to escalate their pressure ("You've got to, right now!") until students give in and comply with the teacher's demands.

4. Controlling teachers impatiently grab the learning materials and say, "Here, do it like this," or "Here, let me do this for you," as they push students toward answers, solutions, and desired ways of behaving as if the point of the instructional time was not learning and skill development but merely proving that one can reproduce a modeled behavior or a right answer.

5. Instead of acknowledging and accepting students' expressions of resistance and negative emotions, controlling teachers counter and try to change students' "bad attitude" into something more acceptable to the teacher. For example, instead of saying the aforementioned "Yes, this is hard; it can make anyone feel frustrated. What could we do differently?" controlling teachers tend to say, "Quit your whining; if you would have practiced like I told you to, then this wouldn't be so hard. So, shape up, and get to work."

While a controlling motivating style is more commonplace in the classroom than is an autonomy-supportive style, teachers can learn how to become significantly more autonomy-supportive toward students. In a meta-analysis of 20 training programs designed to teach people how to be autonomy supportive, the average effect size for the training group (compared to a control group) was an impressive $d = .63$ (Su & Reeve, 2011). Evidently, given focused training and support, teachers can learn how to become significantly more autonomy supportive than they were. This is exciting because the students of teachers who participate in these autonomy-supportive training programs show clear and meaningful subsequent
benefits from their teachers’ enhanced motivating style, including greater autonomous motivation (Tessier, Sarrazin, & Ntoumanis, 2010), engagement (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004), and achievement (deCharms, 1976).

Music and Motivation

Several broad themes help organize the somewhat diverse research literature on the motivation to pursue music learning. There have been a number of reviews of this literature in recent years, each with its own focus on model-building (Hallam, 2002), pedagogical implications (O’Neill & McPherson, 2002), developmental considerations (Austin, Renwick, & McPherson, 2006), and the wider achievement-motivation literature (Maehr, Pintrich, & Linnenbrink, 2002). Here we provide a brief overview of some major theoretical constructs related not only to SDT but also to achievement motivation—self-efficacy beliefs, task value, goal orientations, flow, and interest—before focusing on the application of these theoretical constructs to research in the context of music teaching and learning and their relevance to SDT.

Self-Determined Motivation

In the often intense teacher-student relationship of music education, a strong effect of teachers’ autonomy-supportive or controlling behavior might be expected, as in the Pelletier et al. (2001) study of swimmers and their coaches. Evans (2009) conducted an intriguing study asking young adults who had learned a musical instrument to reflect on the extent to which their musical participation had satisfied their need for autonomy, competence, and a sense of belonging. At the time of choosing to discontinue music participation, the participants reported feeling a lower sense of these needs being satisfied than when starting in elementary school.

As with other educational contexts, the learning environment is associated with music students’ perceptions of their level of autonomy, with extrinsic motivation associated with the frequency of competitive performances, for instance (Rohrer, 1999). Anguiano (2006) investigated middle-school instrumentalists’ perceptions of their teachers’ autonomy support with questionnaire items such as “my band director tries to understand how I see a situation before suggesting how to deal with it.” This measure of autonomy support predicted both the perceived autonomy of the students in their music classroom and their adoption of learning goals (e.g., “I like music I’ll learn from, even if I make a lot of mistakes”). These self-beliefs in turn predicted students’ motivation to continue with their music participation.
Our own recent research (Renwick, McCormick & McPherson, 2009) has focused on relations between students’ beliefs about their autonomy and their learning strategies when practicing their instruments. We explored a range of reasons a student might give for striving in their music-making (see fig. 1.8.1), ranging from purely intrinsic (e.g., “because I love playing my instrument”) to completely external (e.g., “because I’ll get in trouble if I don’t”). With a sample of students aged 8–19 years, internal motivation was the strongest predictor of effective forms of practicing, such as effort management, monitoring of accuracy, and use of corrective strategies. Extrinsic forms of motivation that emerged, such as the desire to avoid negative emotions and to attain approval from the teacher, provided a more differentiated conception of motivation than had previously been empirically demonstrated in music learning (Renwick, 2008). Our questionnaire and qualitative data suggested that young people are certainly not merely “motivated” or “unmotivated.” Case studies (Renwick, 2008) suggest that these extrinsic motives are very real for the young musicians, but in many cases they may only motivate a student to make a minimal effort to engage in practicing, such as adopting a “run-through” approach. This would suggest that attempts by teachers and parents to enhance learning by increasing the salience of external, social, and shame-related motives are likely to be ineffective: it is predominantly internal motivation that must be developed and recruited in order for students to engage in effective music learning.

Although intrinsic motivation may be the primary driver of musical engagement “for the love of it,” there are clearly many aspects of musical training that require an adaptive form of extrinsic motivation (Renwick, 2008), because of the many aspects of deliberate practice that are not inherently enjoyable. In this sense, SDT’s theory of internalization and integration can be seen as a useful lens for understanding the motivation of music students as they struggle with the enormous demands of acquiring musical expertise.

### SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS

The motivational effects of people’s beliefs about their own competence have been central to a range of dominant motivational theories focusing on the question “Can I do this task?” Self-efficacy is defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). While general competence beliefs relate to people’s global feelings of ability in a subject area such as music, self-efficacy relates to people’s level of confidence in their ability to perform very specific tasks, such as a difficult section of a piece. Self-efficacy has been found to be a strong predictor of academic achievement, independent of the effect of actual cognitive competence (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivée, 1991). This effect was mediated by students’ increased use of strategies such as monitoring of time, persistence, and knowing when to accept a challenge; the main difference was in the perception of the task rather than in their actual competencies.
accept a correct hypothesis. These results have been replicated with young musicians (McPherson & McCormick, 2006), showing self-efficacy to be a strong predictor of achievement in music examinations.

**Task Value**

Expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) suggests that students’ competence beliefs are the strongest predictor of their actual achievement. The other main element of the theory—the extent to which people value an activity—is a strong predictor of their decisions to continue with their engagement. People’s estimations of the value of an achievement activity are thought to comprise four main components:

- Attainment value: the perceived importance of success in the activity
- Utility value: its usefulness in everyday life
- Intrinsic interest: the pleasure to be gained from engagement in the activity itself
- Perceived cost: the sacrifice of other activities and emotional resources that engagement entails (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000)

Developmental research has found that this multifaceted conception of task value emerges from a more holistic one throughout the school years; young children will not typically draw the fine distinctions between aspects of task value as do adolescents (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In elementary school, children’s perceptions of their own competence and valuing of music generally declines rapidly even before most have had any formal instruction in the area (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Alarminglly, this decline is far more pronounced with music than reading and mathematics, and even occurs before school music is introduced in many countries. Despite this general decline, children’s perceptions of music as interesting and important, and their feelings of being good at it, predict the time they will devote to practicing and their choice of whether or not to participate in music over rival activities such as sport.

McPherson and McCormick (1999) found that task value predicted students’ engagement in several aspects of music practice. A follow-up study (McPherson & McCormick, 2000) investigated the effects of task value on students’ examination results. Together with a strong effect of self-efficacy, only task value added to the ability to predict achievement scores. Factors traditionally assumed to play a major role, such as self-reported practice time and anxiety, did not predict the music examination result when controlling for the measures of perceived competence and task value.

Wigfield and Eccles (2000) have theorized that the nature of task value would change as children mature. Young children primarily value activities for their
inherent interest and enjoyment, whereas in elementary school, children's experience of a wider variety of activities gives them a greater sense of the difference between the utility, importance, and enjoyment of a pursuit such as music. In high school, as young people approach career decisions, their choices start to be determined more by their perception of the usefulness of the activity and their expectation of being successful in it (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This change may be particularly relevant in its effect on the choices that adolescents make about continuing or discontinuing their involvement in music.

**Interest**

Interest has emerged as an important aspect of motivation research (Renninger, Hidi, & Krapp, 1992). Researchers have distinguished between two types of interest: (1) a personal interest, which might develop from a casual interest into a central part of a person's identity, and (2) situational interest, where particular aspects of a learning environment, such as novelty, spark an increase in attention. Our case study (Renwick & McPherson, 2002) of a 12-year-old girl is an example of both: a student clarinetist was observed practicing a particular piece with a highly atypical level of attention, persistence, and strategy use, later revealing that this was a piece that the student had chosen herself, in contrast to the usual process of teacher assignment. This choice appeared to have been motivated by the situational interest in the particular piece, as well as an emerging personal interest in jazz.

**Goal Orientations**

A predominant perspective guiding achievement motivation research in recent times has been goal theory. The work of several theorists (e.g., Dweck, 1986) compares two sets of goals that students are likely to use in guiding their academic behavior. On the one hand, *learning* goals focus on learning for its own sake, and basing one's achievement on how much is learned. On the other hand, *performance* goals are in place where the student is primarily motivated to outperform others (a *performance-approach* goal) or to avoid failure based on peer comparisons (a *performance-avoid* goal; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Early work on goal theory has found that learning goals are associated with use of deeper cognitive strategies, higher levels of achievement, and students attributing their successes to effort (and their failures to a lack of effort). Performance goals, on the other hand, are often associated with an absence of these adaptive patterns of learning (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001).
Considerable research has investigated the extent to which classroom practices affect the goal orientation of individual students (e.g., Ames, 1992), with various aspects of high school teaching, such as ability groupings and public assessment, typically fostering a performance-goal orientation. In the context of the school instrumental ensemble, Sandene (1998) investigated students' attitudes toward their classrooms as promoting ego goals or task goals. Just as self-determination researchers have investigated students' perceptions of their own motivation alongside their perceptions of their learning environment, Sandene's goal orientation measures were supplemented with assessments of how the participants perceived their classrooms—as fostering either learning goals or ego goals. Perceived classroom performance goals predicted the adoption of performance goals in individual class members, and perceived classroom learning goals predicted personal learning goals, as well as perceived competence. In turn, personal learning goals and perceived competence were associated with higher levels of motivation in music. Observations of the individual classrooms found that readily measured behaviors, such as the ratio of negative to positive feedback, were strongly associated with students' perception of the motivational climate of the classroom. These perceptions may take time to develop, however: Austin (1991) found that experimental manipulation of competitive versus noncompetitive goals had little effect on the behavior of young musicians.

O'Neill (1997) conducted a groundbreaking music education study investigating the effects of children's habitual responses to failure. Children who were soon to commence learning an instrument were given an experimentally manipulated experience of failure in a problem-solving task, in order to gauge their adaptive (mastery-oriented) or maladaptive (helpless) response in subsequent attempts. After a year, children showing a mastery orientation showed musical achievement superior to the helpless children's, beyond the effects of other crucial factors, such as time spent practicing.

FLOW

In contemplating the typical pattern of disenchantment with formal music learning that occurs in adolescence (Sloboda, 2001), it is worth reminding ourselves that music is inherently engaging for infants and young children. This attraction involves music's physicality and its potential for the child to manipulate skill and challenge, possibly resulting in the concentrated feeling of total immersion in an activity defined as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is thought to occur when there is a match between a high level of skill and a high level of challenge, in contrast, for instance, to a high level of challenge and a lower level of skill, which is likely to produce anxiety. O’Neill (1999) found interesting differences in the reported frequency of flow experience among teenage musicians of different abilities: those attending a nonspecialist school and high achievers at a specialist music
school reported feeling in flow more often than moderate achievers at the specialist school. This finding would suggest that even for young musicians who have made a commitment to pursuing specialist musical training, a mismatch of skill and challenge could be detrimental to the motivation to persist.

**Implications for Educational Practice**

The key implication of research for systems of teaching and learning is that the development of a sense of autonomy and competence need to be supported if young musicians are to gain the capacity to motivate themselves and employ the self-regulatory skills they will need for lifelong musical engagement. These mean that music teachers need to learn how to support students’ autonomy, how to support students’ competence, and how not to be controlling toward students.

**Supporting Autonomy**

The master-apprentice tradition of music learning is often characterized by authoritarian approaches that undermine autonomous student learning (Persson, 1994). This is a problem because the greater the perceived difference in status, expertise, or social power that exists between any two people interacting, the greater the likelihood that the higher status person (master) will relate to the lower status person (apprentice) in a controlling way. Many music teachers are highly controlling in the way they decide student issues such as repertoire choice, examination enrollment, and required approaches to practicing, often with little sense of negotiation with the student (Renwick, 2008). Recognizing the temptation for powerful instructors to be controlling, the enactment of an autonomy-supportive motivating style explicitly seeks to empower students by taking and valuing their perspective and by inviting and welcoming their thoughts, feelings, and actions into the flow of instruction to the point that instruction becomes a codetermined, rather than a unilateral, activity.

To become more autonomy supportive and to work toward greater teacher-student codetermination, music teachers might consider the following acts of instruction that parallel the five autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors introduced earlier.

- To nurture students’ inner motivational resources. Instead of unilaterally telling students what to do, ask students what music-relevant goals they have for themselves, discover what is most interesting and valuable to them
about music, and integrate a sense of challenge, curiosity-induction, and intrinsic motivation into the structure of every lesson plan.

- **To provide explanatory rationales.** Before asking students to engage in potentially uninteresting activities, such as learning scales, provide a rationale that explains in a satisfying way why the activity is truly worth the students’ effort. The explanatory rationale will help students internalize the value of the activity in a way that allows them to transform their otherwise vulnerable motivational state (e.g., “Why do I have to do this?”) into a more volitional agency (e.g., “Yes, now that you explain it, this is worth doing.”).

- **To rely on noncontrolling, informational language.** Rather than uttering pressure-packed communications that students have to do this and must do that, use communications that encourage students to discover their own optimal learning strategies. As problem-solving tasks change, scaffold students’ efforts to learn ever more adaptive and sophisticated learning strategies.

- **To display patience to allow time for self-paced learning to occur.** Displaying patience means giving students the time they need to set goals, make plans, revise strategies, monitor progress, deeply understand what they are trying to do, diagnose problems, and formulate and test out problem-solving strategies. This means encouraging students to think about and monitor their personal goals, choose their own repertoire, and work at their own pace, and it does not mean pushing students toward answers and idealized performances.

- **To acknowledge and accept students’ expressions of resistance and negative emotions.** Teachers might support students in managing their frustration and other negative emotions by acknowledging and accepting that these are part of the process of skill development.

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**Supporting Competence**

When music teachers support autonomy, they support much more than students’ psychological need for autonomy. An autonomy-supportive motivating style nurtures not only students’ need for autonomy (Reeve & Jang, 2006) but also their need for competence (Deci et al., 1981; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). To understand this relationship between autonomy support and greater perceived competence, consider how the following autonomy-supportive ways of relating to a student can grow an authentic sense of competence: taking the time to listen; offering helpful and timely hints when students seem stuck; providing encouragement for initiative and effort; praising signs of progress; postponing advice until first understanding the student’s goal and perspective; and providing scaffolding when it is needed and when it is invited. The more teachers use these strategies, the more competent students tend to perceive themselves to be.

What autonomy-supportive teachers are doing that grows students’ sense of competence is fostering students’ self-beliefs that they are fully capable of engaging
successfully in the challenges involved in acquiring musical excellence. The satisfaction and positive emotion that arise from making progress and from successfully completing one's own self-regulatory cycles (McPherson & Renwick, 2011) tend to spur musicians on to consolidating their skills so that they become increasingly motivated to address future challenges. It is in these times of making progress and experiencing spontaneous satisfactions such as joy and intrinsic motivation that one's sense of competence grows. The question for music educators is then “How do I help students make progress and experience interest, flow, and enjoyment?” One evidence-based answer to this crucial question is to relate to students with an autonomy-supportive motivating style.

**How Not to Be Controlling Toward Students**

It is easy to recommend that music instructors support students’ autonomy and competence, yet it is hard to see how this is either possible or practical in an era of high-stakes external evaluations and accountability. Most teachers are not controlling because they want to be. Instead, most teachers adopt a controlling style because they themselves feel such pressure to produce student successes in examinations and competitions (Reeve, 2009). The music curriculum is populated with pressure-inducing motivations, such as to do well on examinations, concerts, and competitions, to please parents, to be accepted into a selective ensemble or school by audition, and other high-stakes goals. Recognizing that music teachers face a relentless presence of implicit and explicit pressures, researchers recommend the following three steps that teachers can use to become less controlling and more autonomy supportive.

The first task in becoming more autonomy supportive is to become less controlling—to avoid controlling sentiment, controlling language, and controlling behaviors. To do so, teachers need to become mindful of all the pressures that unconsciously push them toward a controlling style—such as the dual burdens of being responsible and accountable for student performances—so that teachers can make instructional decisions based on choice and on sound pedagogical practice, rather than on the ever-present daily demands and circumstances. The second task is to truly want to support students’ autonomy. A sincere commitment to support students’ autonomy typically comes from an appreciation of just how beneficial autonomy support is to both students and teachers. That is, with autonomy support, students display higher quality motivation, engagement, healthy development, learning, performance, and well-being (Reeve, 2009), while teachers experience less emotional exhaustion and an increased sense of personal satisfaction from their teaching (Roth et al., 2007). Finally, the third task is to learn the “how-to” of autonomy support. To answer the commonly asked question “Okay, autonomy support sounds nice in theory, but what specifically would
I do?" the chapter has offered five specific autonomy-supportive acts of instruction. A wealth of intervention-based research makes it clear that by integrating these five acts of instruction into the way they relate to students on a daily basis (1) teachers can learn how to be more autonomy supportive and (2) students do benefit when their teachers become more autonomy supportive (Reeve, Jang, et al., 2004).

**Reflective Questions**

1. How much freedom did you have over your musical choices while at school? Has this influenced your musical engagement since leaving school?
2. As a music learner, you may have observed teaching behavior that takes a highly controlling approach, but that appears to "work." How would you explain these observations in light of the research evidence presented in the chapter?
3. How has your sense of competence as a musician evolved over the years? Has its importance increased? Has it become more competitive or more focused on improvement of your skills on their own terms?

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**Key Sources**


**WEBSITE**


**REFERENCES**


