

How Can Teachers Develop Passion for Teaching?

Passionate teachers invest considerable time and energy into their teaching, attract students' attention, and can inspire students' intrinsic motivation and vitality (Day, 2004; Moè, 2016; Patrick et al., 2000).

Teachers' passion may matter not only for their own experience of teaching, but also for their students.

Students describe passionate teachers as demonstrating enthusiasm, energy and engagement, while using their expertise and preparation to create engaging learning experiences. Students who perceived greater teacher passion also reported greater passion for their own field of study, with the highest levels reported when both perceived teacher passion and social support were high (Chichekian et al., 2025).

Not all passion for teaching is experienced in the same way. The Dualistic Model of Passion distinguishes between harmonious and obsessive passion based on how teaching is internalized into the teacher's identity (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Harmonious Passion	Obsessive Passion
- Teaching is volitionally internalized into the teacher's identity and provides a sense of satisfaction and personal ownership (Vallerand et al., 2003; Carbonneau et al., 2008). - Associated with greater job satisfaction (Carbonneau et al., 2008; Horwood et al., 2021), enthusiasm (Keller et al., 2016), flow (Carpentier et al., 2012), persistence (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013), teaching efficacy (Moè, 2016), and high-quality relationships (Lafrenière et al., 2011).	- Teaching is internalized in a controlled way and is associated with obligatory pressure, overwork, and conflict with other aspects of life (Carbonneau et al., 2008; Vallerand et al., 2003). - Associated with anxiety and depression, shame, rumination, an unbalanced life, and burnout (Vallerand, 2012; Vallerand et al., 2003; Carpentier et al., 2012; Donahue et al., 2012; Houliort et al., 2014; Fernet et al., 2014; Horwood et al., 2021; Lalande et al., 2017).

Given these different outcomes, the focus is not simply on developing more passion, but on developing greater harmonious passion for teaching.

Research has identified two malleable and personally controllable pathways through which teachers can develop greater harmonious passion for teaching (Jang et al., 2025).

1. Become More Autonomy-Supportive

- Autonomy-supportive teaching involves adopting a student-focused attitude and an understanding tone and using autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors, such as taking students' perspectives, encouraging students to pursue their personal interests, and providing explanatory rationales for teacher requests (Reeve & Cheon, 2021; Jang et al., 2025).

Practical Tips:

- Take students' perspectives.
- Encourage students to pursue their personal interests.
- Provide explanatory rationales for teacher requests.
- Use autonomy-supportive rather than controlling instructional behaviors.

WHY?

Research has shown that teachers who participated in an autonomy-supportive teaching workshop developed greater harmonious passion and lower obsessive passion across the academic year (Jang et al., 2025). Autonomy-supportive teaching enables teachers to experience greater value from teaching

and greater psychological need satisfaction, facilitating the autonomous internalization of teaching and the development of harmonious passion (Vallerand et al., 2003; Jang et al., 2025).

2. Adopt Intrinsic Instructional Goals

Intrinsic instructional goals are learning objectives embedded into a lesson plan that provide opportunities for students to pursue personal growth (e.g., learning a new skill) or relationship growth (e.g., cooperating with a classmate) during classroom activities (Jang, 2019).

Practical Tips:

Integrate intrinsic instructional goals into your lesson plans and classroom instruction by creating opportunities for:

Personal Growth: Helping students learn a new skill or learn new things.

Relationship Growth: Encouraging students to cooperate with a classmate or develop closer bonds between classmates.

WHY?

Teachers who adopted more intrinsic instructional goals subsequently became more autonomy-supportive, which in turn predicted increases in harmonious passion for teaching.

Intrinsic instructional goals can provide teachers with greater psychological need satisfaction, while seeing benefits for students can increase the value teachers derive from teaching. Together, greater need satisfaction and greater valuing of teaching can support the development of harmonious passion (Jang et al., 2025).

Key Definitions:

Passion	A strong inclination toward an activity that one likes (or even loves), finds important, in which one invests time and energy, and is part of one's identity (Vallerand et.al., 2003). Harmonious Passion: Results from an autonomous internalization of the activity into one's identity. The person freely accepts the activity as important without contingencies attached to it. One can engage in the activity flexibly and in harmony with other areas of life. Obsessive Passion: Results from a controlled internalization of the activity into one's identity. The person experiences an uncontrollable urge to engage because of intrapersonal or interpersonal pressures or contingencies. This Passion can control the person, making it difficult to disengage and potentially creating conflict with other areas of life.
Intrinsic Instructional Goals	Intrinsic instructional goals are learning objectives embedded into a lesson plan that provide opportunities for students to pursue personal growth (e.g., learning a new skill) or relationship growth (e.g., cooperating with a classmate) during classroom activities. These goals can create opportunities for students to experience satisfaction of their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness during classroom instruction (Jang, 2019).

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