



“WITHOUT CLIMATE EDUCATION, I DON’T SEE THE VALUE IN GOING TO SCHOOL AT ALL.”

TEACH THE FUTURE IS A STUDENT-LED MOVEMENT, CAMPAIGNING FOR BROAD CLIMATE EDUCATION IN THE UK. THEY ARE ALSO ADVOCATING FOR GREEN VOCATIONAL COURSES AND CLIMATE-FRIENDLY EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS. STUDENT VOLUNTEER ELEANOR ANDRADE MAY TELLS US MORE



HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH TEACH THE FUTURE?

My introduction to climate campaigning was through the school strikes and the UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN), which feels like a lifetime ago! UKSCN was campaigning for youth strikes, votes for 16-year-olds and above, and adequate teaching on climate education. Through the school strikes, Teach the Future became its own entity focusing on climate education.

I was in year 12 and getting to the point where I had to choose my own path. I’m concerned about the climate crisis, but I didn’t pick A-level subjects that would teach me about it, like geography or chemistry. I felt I was missing out and if I wanted to make a difference in the world in terms of climate change, I wasn’t going to be able to do it. That’s why I joined Teach the Future.

WAS TEACH THE FUTURE SET UP BY STUDENTS?

Yes, Teach the Future is entirely student-led. We’re supported by a handful of staff from SOS-UK, which helps students organising for sustainability. They help with things like banking and finance, legal issues and safeguarding.

WHY IS THE TEACH THE FUTURE CAMPAIGN IMPORTANT TO YOU?

If we’re not being taught the skills and knowledge we need to equip us to face the effects of climate change and to not have careers that will have

horrible consequences for the world around us, then what is the purpose of education?

For me, realising this brought on despair as well as eco-anxiety. I felt helpless about not being able to act against climate change. I felt we were doomed. I felt that certain things in my life weren’t worth the effort because they didn’t help to solve climate change.

Climate education means that no other student has to feel this way. All students would feel prepared and that their education has a purpose. Climate change impacts every aspect of our lives so it should be mentioned in every aspect of our education because there’s no part of the curriculum that it doesn’t affect. Without climate education, I don’t see the value in going to school at all.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR TEACH THE FUTURE?

I help with communications, pretty much. There are a handful of us who run several different social media channels: Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. We create posts a few times a week to engage other young people with climate education and why we need it, hopefully to inform them about how impactful it can be.

I also help write emails and turn them out for our mailing list. We connect with other organisations to spread our message further and reach out to their supporters, as well. A few months ago, I ran a communications



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ABOUT ELEANOR



AGE: 19

STUDYING: Quantitative Social Science, University of Sheffield, UK

www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/2022/quantitative-social-sciences-sociology-bsc

WHAT'S THE COURSE ABOUT: Polling and research for societal good
THOUGHTS ABOUT THE COURSE: “I’m still in my first year but it’s absolutely what I want to be doing.”

campaign for a fundraiser. We managed to raise £8,300 plus another £1,000 or so in gift aid, which was incredible. This involved emailing people and getting our message across through social media and influencer activists.

One of our posts featured on Emma Watson’s Instagram story, which was possibly more bizarre than going to Parliament! [Earlier this year, Teach the Future’s Climate Education Bill was proposed by Nadia Whittome MP for its Second Reading in the House of Commons. The Bill was first proposed in Parliament in the form of a 10-minute debate in November 2021.]

HOW MUCH TIME DOES THIS TAKE YOU?

It comes in waves. Volunteers put in as much or as little time as they can or want. I was doing about 8 hours a week or so, working up to the second reading in Parliament, but it’s easy to take a break. The meetings take place after school because almost all our volunteers are still in formal education.

HOW HAVE YOU BENEFITED FROM BEING INVOLVED IN THIS CAMPAIGN?

I had next to no skills before joining Teach the Future, but one of the key parts of this campaign, aside from getting climate education into the curriculum, is providing skills and opportunities to young people who otherwise don’t have them. I’ve come so far in the last few years. There are so many things I’ve done that I would never have imagined doing.

DOES VOLUNTEERING FOR TEACH THE FUTURE MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND YOU?

Absolutely, it does. It isn’t necessarily about taking action; it’s also about being surrounded by people who feel the same way. When I was at school and starting to become aware of the climate crisis, it was as if no one else cared. Teachers weren’t teaching it; it felt like no one thought about it or wanted to do anything about it.

WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR YOU WITH THIS CAMPAIGN?

For me, success would be to have climate education embedded within the curriculum. It would be to have skills training and vocational courses that prepare kids for green jobs. In the last few decades, certain trades have been severely undervalued, so we need to bring back vocational courses to have any kind of green transition.

WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEND TO YOUNG PEOPLE READING THIS ARTICLE?

If you’re worried about climate change or any other issues that feel out of your control and too big solve, there are people who feel the same way and are looking to take action. It’s not impossible, it’s never impossible; you will be able to find people who are on your side and want to help change the situation if you look for them.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH TEACH THE FUTURE

- Sign Teach the Future’s petition: www.teachthefuture.uk/action/petition
- Write to your elected representative to ask them to support climate education: www.teachthefuture.uk/action/rep
- Ask your teacher to join the Teachers Network so that they can share resources with other teachers: www.teachthefuture.uk/action/teachers-network
- Donate: www.teachthefuture.uk/an/donate
- Subscribe to the mailing list: www.teachthefuture.uk/an/mailling-list
- Volunteer: www.teachthefuture.uk/an/volunteer