# Notes on which activities are likely to be effective for teachers

## Methods of teaching itself

| **Activity** | **Time commitment and cost estimates** | **Explanation and comments on effectiveness** |
|---|---|---|
| Teach your pupils as well as you can | Teachers can always learn new ideas, reflect on their practice, read academic research, read about example of good practice etc.<br><br>There is a limitless amount of work that you could do to improve your teaching practice and enhance the learning and experiences of your individual pupils.<br><br>Some of these activities are very labour-intensive for relatively small return for your pupils, however. It may take a huge amount of time and effort to only slightly improve your teaching practice. It is therefore quite likely that there are many other activities which you could undertake which would do a larger amount of good for the amount of time that you would need to put into it. | Better teachers lead to better economic outcomes, higher attendance at better universities and lower teenage birth rates for the students they teach, and the benefits talented teachers provide to society are considerably greater than what is recouped by their salary. This is the common-sense and widely held view, though there are some dissenting voices on the impact of schooling, at least at the tertiary level.<br><br>If you're working in a rich country, the impact you have as a teacher is by improving the lives of people who are almost all going to end up in the richest 15% of the world's population.<br><br>Teaching is an area that is already extremely popular among the socially-motivated, so it's unlikely that you'll make as big a difference on the margin within education as you could elsewhere.<br><br>Natural personality match, prior understanding of how to connect well with young people and general intelligence can all help to make people good teachers, but experience built up over time is at least as important as each of these. Each of these things is probably more important than having greater-than-average enthusiasm |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | or positive social-motivations. This all means that socially-motivated teachers are less likely to be able to make an immediate direct positive impact than they might believe.<br>[I definitely need to look this stuff up to confirm but I remember being convinced by some criticisms of the Teach First model which rested partially on the idea that experience matters more than enthusiasm]<br><br>Even the most talented classroom teacher can only impact around 30 students at a time, less than is possible using other approaches. |
| Advocate for important issues (and EA ideas) within normal lesson-time and relationships with students, where appropriate | Minimal / no time or £ costs.<br><br>Possibly indirect career costs, if you take this so far that pupils/parents complain, or staff begin to take a more negative view of you as a teacher. | Opportunities usually pretty limited by exam-board / curriculum requirements and by the fact that many parents and co-workers deem it to be inappropriate to share your own views and perspectives with pupils |

## Paths for your career

NOTE: These will not all be mutually compatible. Pick those which you think you would be most able to excel at

| **Activity** | **Time commitment and cost estimates** | **Explanation and comments on effectiveness** |
|---|---|---|
| Teach subjects / a subject that you genuinely believe does have high value for the pupils and for society | Possibly a time commitment to thinking through and researching the issues.<br><br>Different subjects are more or less in demand in different countries / areas, and so subject selection may affect your career opportunities. | Some subjects are more useful for those that study them than others, in terms of the skills that those that study them develop and in terms of whether society needs these skills and this body of knowledge to be taught.<br><br>This is certainly not clear-cut. If, however, after reading and reflecting, you do not believe that certain subjects do actually |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | This could be easy (e.g. if a history teacher no longer believed history was useful, it may be easy to begin to teach politics and sociology as well / instead, at least for ages 16-18).<br><br>Significant time (and therefore, in the short-term also £) costs if you were to decide to retrain to enable you to teach a very different subject. | confer many benefits (to society and/or the pupils individually), then it may be preferable to try to redirect your teaching career to teach other subjects instead.<br><br>If you are completely retraining (e.g. English to science) in order to do the most good, however, this is unlikely to be time/cost efficient – if you are personally willing to retrain, then it is quite likely that you could retrain to do far more good with your career than by teaching in a different subject (see 80,000 hours advice to think this process through fully: https://80000hours.org/ ) |
| Try gain influence over the programme delivered in formtime/PHSE/citizens hip sessions, to be able to build awareness and understanding of EA and other important messages in an evidence-based manner | Opportunities would vary by precise local circumstances.<br><br>Opportunities may arise by chance, which would therefore have a relatively low time or £ cost.<br>It may be possible to actively pursue this course though, which might entail larger time costs.<br><br>Building experience in related matters, however possible, and by volunteering to help out in related tasks and events in your school may help you to do this, but may take significant amounts of time and effort. | Promoting Effective Altruism could do massive amounts of good, especially by creating a "multiplier effect". Essentially, by making others more effective at doing good and in supporting more effective charities and charitable causes, you could indirectly lead to lots more good being done than you could have done yourself more directly.<br><br>https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/promoting-effective-altruism/<br><br>Note that there is more detail on this below, in the "promoting effective altruism ideas" section. |
| Try to gain influence over careers' advice, to be able to encourage people to do the most good through their careers | As above | As above.<br><br>Note additionally that 80,000 hours is a careers-advice service, and that much of its advice could be adapted for younger students. Note that at the moment, however, the advice is aimed primarily at graduates, and that therefore it may be inappropriate for younger pupils in terms of 1) the assumptions about the age of the readers 2) the assumptions about the intellectual capabilities of the readers, in the sense that the advice largely assumes |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | that readers are able to redirect their careers if they choose to and would have a good chance at excelling in the different career paths offered. In its current format, much of it is therefore misleading or irrelevant for many individuals. |
| Try to gain influence over charity decisions, to be able to promote effective charities and EA ideas | As above. | As above.<br><br>Note that this option may be less effective at promoting EA ideas than attempting to do this directly through formtime/PHSE etc, but that it could mean that there was a substantial direct benefit, by directing money to effective organisations.<br>Note, however, that the amounts of money that can be redirected to effective charities in this way, however, are likely far less than if you chose to redirect your career and follow an earning-to-give strategy (see https://80000hours.org/articles/earning-to-give/ ), since schools tend to raise relatively small amounts of money for charity.<br><br>It is likely that there will be various objections to your charity choices, and that schools will prefer charities they have a more direct connection with. Even if obtaining a position of influence, it may therefore still be difficult to make the intended changes. |
| Teach in schools which are struggling to find quality staff or in especially under-privileged areas. This same principle could be applied to moving to a less privileged country, or one with greater educational difficulties, and teaching in schools tere. | It will likely be easier to acquire a job at one of these schools, and possibly it will offer more rapid career advancement too (as internal vacancies come up more frequently).<br><br>It will likely have larger emotional/personal difficulties than teaching in many other schools would. | This is probably best once you have already gained experience and expertise.<br><br>Often these schools are facing particular difficulties with their pupils and/or staff: you are most likely to have a positive direct impact here if you are well-equipped to deal with the difficulties (behaviour?) or to meet the staffing skills-gaps. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | There may be barriers to teaching in another country, such as requiring that you learn and understand and entirely new educational system, or educational (and wider cultural) expectations.<br><br>Teaching in a less developed country may require a significant cut to your pay in real terms, as well as in terms of lower access to public facilities and amenities. | Note that this goal is likely in many cases to directly contradict the following suggested career path.<br><br>It seems unlikely that taking this path will actually lead to a significant impact when compared to other career options; it relies primarily on you being an exceptional teacher, and even then this will only lead to mild improvement of educational outcomes for a small number of individuals. |
| Teach in schools where the pupils are likely to reach positions of high influence (i.e. probably private schools and the most prestigious schools you can) | Jobs at these schools are likely to be more competitive, and so preparing yourself well enough to get one of these jobs may well have a large time, effort and possibly even £ cost.<br><br>If working for a private school, however, these schools usually pay better than other schools. They may also be easier to teach in and have less emotional/personal difficulties for you (unless you find the reduced direct impact less motivating). | This could mean that the ideas you encourage in the pupils could later affect others, or be spread to others, and could therefore massively multiply the effectiveness of your efforts to promote EA ideas.<br><br>https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/promoting-effective-altruism/<br><br>See here (especially section 4) for thoughts on why teaching influential or especially “talented” students might help increase your advocacy of EA: https://80000hours.org/articles/the-advocate/ |
| Move into education technology – including online education | ?? | You can affect larger numbers of people than you can directly as a teacher |
| Aim to move into educational management (i.e. running a school) or educational policy. | Not quite sure but I imagine that this is VERY time/effort intensive. | So that your evidence-based ideas and understanding can be spread more widely.<br><br>Although both quite different career paths, they might both provide greater opportunity for promoting Effective Altruism ideas and therefore having a “multiplier effect” (see https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/promoting-effective-altruism/ ) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | If you are genuinely better at your job than alternative candidates, this may mean that you have a personal impact on a larger number of pupils under your management than you would if you remained a classroom teacher. If you are not better than the alternative candidates, however, your impact in this sense could be slightly negative.<br><br>Due to the high effort and time required, it seems likely that this route is a less efficient way of promoting evidence-based and Effective Altruism ideas than some of the more direct options. |
| Move into evidence-based educational research | Could be quite time and effort intensive.<br>Without doing further research, I am not sure of how much academics earn compared to teachers. | A small number of researchers have a far greater impact than most other researchers. A high level of personal fit (both with academia in general and your specific branch of research) is needed to ensure that your research is as high-impact as possible (see here for more detail on these two ideas https://80000hours.org/articles/research-2/ )<br><br>For a consideration of which topics might be most useful to research, see here: https://80000hours.org/2015/03/education-research-interview-with-dan-greene/<br><br>Research in education may be lower-impact than you would hope. From my personal experience, research is only partially or very slowly disseminated, understood and used within the teaching world (as new teachers join the profession, by occasional CPD sessions, or by a few unusually up-to-date and conscientious teachers). What is more, it is frequently misunderstood (most notably how Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences was widely corrupted into meaning that every lesson had to contain separate tasks for visual, auditory and |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | kinaesthetic learners – this became near educational orthodoxy in the UK). |
| Focus your career on making the dissemination of research down to teachers more efficient<br><br>Attain through moving into policy?<br>Create online tools?<br>Freelance CPD operator?<br><br>Work for research ED or charities like CUREE? | ??? | There is already much education research out there, but this is often widely ignored or misunderstood.<br><br>This doesn't really seem like a high impact career decision, when compared to more pressing global problems. As a comparison, even if you helped to make every teacher in your country a research informed practitioner overnight, would the impact be comparable to even a relatively small increase in funding for a GiveWell top charity (e.g. deworming initiatives to keep children in school/good health for longer)? It seems unlikely. |

## Promoting effective altruism ideas

| **Activity** | **Time commitment and cost estimates** | **Explanation and comments on effectiveness** |
|---|---|---|
| Deliver the Students for High-Impact Charity (SHIC) core curriculum to an extra-curricular club | Depending on your precise circumstances, setting up the club itself may involve a small time input (and possibly a very small £ cost to create publicity materials).<br><br>For the first 7 sessions (soon to be expanded), the preparation effort required is very low, as all the levels are provided, with full resources prepared, here: https://shicschools.org/shic-introductory-program/<br><br>In some schools, staff are paid for running extra-curricular clubs. | The SHIC course essentially enables you to promote Effective Altruism to your pupils.<br><br>Promoting Effective Altruism could do massive amounts of good, especially by creating a "multiplier effect". Essentially, by making others more effective at doing good and in supporting more effective charities and charitable causes, you could indirectly lead to lots more good being done than you could have done yourself more directly.<br><br>https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/promoting-effective-altruism/<br><br>It is also worth bearing in mind that running a SHIC club is likely to have the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | benefit of massively promoting the idea of “altruism” at all (before we take into consideration its effectiveness), especially in schools where no similar opportunities exist for pupils. |
| Use elements of the SHIC core-curriculum or other EA ideas in your lessons, where appropriate | If using materials directly from the SHIC curriculum, the preparation effort required is very low, as all the levels are provided, with full resources prepared, here: https://shicschools.org/shic-introductory-program/ | As above.<br><br>If used in your lessons, the pupils are likely to be less personally motivated to do good than those who opt to come to an optional club, but you will access a wider range of pupils. |
| Deliver the shortened SHIC curriculum in form-time/PHSE/citizenship sessions | The preparation effort required is very low, as all the levels are provided, with resources prepared, here: https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/fully-resourced-form-phse-sow-empathy-poverty-and-making-a-difference-11755635<br>You may need to modify them, depending on your precise circumstances. | As above.<br><br>If used in your lessons, the pupils are likely to be less personally motivated to do good than those who opt to come to an optional club, but you will access a wider range of pupils.<br><br>This shortened curriculum is less detailed, but will allow you to reach a greater number of individuals. |
| In any fundraising activities that you have influence over, try to promote effective charities and EA ideas in a non-obtrusive way | Likely to be a negligible time or cost commitment. | As in the “Try to gain influence over charity decisions, to be able to promote effective charities and EA ideas” section above |

## Other opportunities

| **Activity** | **Time commitment and cost estimates** | **Explanation and comments on effectiveness** |
|---|---|---|
| Donate a proportion of your income to effective charities | Conducting research into the most effective charities may take some time, although much of the legwork | It is quite likely that you will do more good through donating your money effectively than you will do through the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | has already been done by a variety of organisations:<br><br>http://givewell.com/<br>https://www.thelifeyoucansave.org/<br>http://www.animalcharityevaluators.org/<br>https://www.effectivealtruism.org/effective-altruism-funds-options/<br><br>How much you choose to spend if up to you. A good target to begin with is the Giving What We Can pledge, to donate 10% of your earnings. https://www.givingwhatwecan.org/pledge/ | direct work of your entire career (note the concerns listed in the "Teach your pupils as well as you can" section above) |
| Volunteer your spare time (especially in the holidays) | Teachers have very long holidays. You can probably use some of this time (as well as some of the time you have over the weekends and in evenings) to volunteer for effective organisations. | Note that often, low-skilled volunteering costs charities (through management time) more than it gains them, apart from in the sense that it tends to lead to donations later. So:<br><br>· Volunteer for cost-effective organisations<br>· Volunteer for labour-constrained charities<br>· Volunteer to best put YOUR skills to use<br>· It is often better to volunteer your time by spreading awareness to your personal connections.<br>· Avoid replaceable, unskilled volunteering.<br>· Seek volunteering opportunities that require minimal management time.<br>· Volunteering for organisations which promote Effective Altruism may enable you to have a "multiplier effect"<br><br>Keep up-to-date with the discussions and opportunities at this group to try to maximise your impact through your volunteering: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1392613437498240/ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Consider changing your career to leave teaching and enter a different sector | Huge time commitment required (probably).<br><br>Possibly huge financial benefit (or some loss). | Probably more likely to be effective if you are early in your career. Follow the full careers guidance at https://80000hours.org/ to consider this option properly. |