**The Five WOWs!**

*Re-thinking the way we teach our kids.*

What’s the real point of education? Why do so many kids hate school? What are the best and worst things that can happen as young people grow up? Why do so many teenagers seem to be suffering mental health issues?

These questions, and many more, go to the heart of a new educational and learning philosophy being developed by journalist, educationalist and best-selling world history author Christopher Lloyd.

After his eldest daughter Matilda got chronically bored at school. Christopher Lloyd and his wife Virginia tried to find out what was going wrong in their daughter’s classroom.

“It was pretty clear that the teacher was charged with getting as many pupils through the reading and maths tests as possible – which is the right thing for her to do. So naturally she focussed her efforts on those kids who needed most attention. But the unintended consequence was that the other kids were being given mind-numbingly tedious worksheets to do just to keep them quiet. As a result Matilda, who was one of thoes kids, began to hate school.”

15 years later and Christopher Lloyd has made it his life’s mission to rethink the way kids are taught – at home, at school and in life. His philosophy is about connecting knowledge back together.

“We still suffer from this Victorian obsession with splitting knowledge up into tiny, disconnected pieces,” says Lloyd. “Instead, we should reconnect knowledge back together, so that curios kids can explore and develop the core life skills they need through what interests them most.”

Today most teaching is done by subject, curriculum and syllabus – with adults telling youngsters what it is they think they need to know.

“But no adult really knows what today’s children are going to need to be able to do in the future, because most of the jobs our kids will do haven’t even been invented yet! What matters far more than cramming their heads full of information is nurturing that natural love of learning we are all born with so that they leave school with a lifelong passion for learning. That way they will be able to retrain themselves, whatever the demands of the future.”

In the 15 years since his daughter fell OUT OF LOVE with school, Lloyd has written more than 15 books to connect knowledge together, including *What on Earth Happened?* (Bloosmbury, 2008 – sold 500,000 copies in 15 languages) and a series of timeline Wallbooks – that explain giant stories in gloriously illustrated narrative timelines. More recently he published a new world history book for kids called *Absolutely Everything!* which sold out tin the UK and US in less than 12 weeks!

In 2010, Lloyd set up his own children’s non-fiction publishing house in collaboration with illustrator Andy Forshaw. What on Earth Books now publishes more than 15 titles a year, many in partnership with august institutions such as the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, The National Trust, The Smithsonian in Washington DC and the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Today, Lloyd divides his time lecturing, writing and working with teachers on creating new ways of inspiring kids in class. At the heart of this is his 5 Wows educational philosophy that aims to tap into lessons learned from evolutionary biology and the latest neuroscientific understandings of the brain to create new strategies for creating environments in which a kids love of learning can flourish.

“Children are not born bored” says Lloyd. “If they were doctors would rightfully call their brains dysfunctional. A healthy brain thrives on exploring and change. Its reward system is designed around creating feelings of joy when we make new connections. That’s what’s at the heat of the 5 Wows approach”.

Lloyd’s is now taking his approach to schools across the UK, US and China.

“The age of mass produced education really has to end,” he says. “It’s the one area of a young person’s life that remains locked into a rigid, fossilized past”

According to Lloyd, the ultimate purpose of education is not about passing exams. Or even learning to read and write. There is only one goal that really matters. It is simply about nurturing a ***lifelong love of learning***. That way every moment of every day is its own adventure. According to Lloyd if you finish your education and do not have a love of learning, you have been failed.

“The good news is that you can easily tell if someone is in love with learning. That’s because it reveals itself through a simple three letter word – universally expressed in every culture throughout the world.”

**WOW!**

For Lloyd, that one little word is the verbalisation of the human brain finding out something new, fascinating, remarkable. It is the result of a shot of joy form our evolutionary reward system that says – yes, that’s great! I love it! WOW!

Lloyd says that if we can find out what makes our brains go WOW! then we can find some important clues about how to create environments that stimulate a lifelong love of learning.

Writing giant world history books and timelines and giving thousands of lectures and workshops, has helped Lloyd find FIVE different but equally important ways in which these WOWs happen.

**Wow 1. The Big Picture**

The first WOW! gets released as a shot of amazement in the brain whenever we take a **big step back and try to see the big picture**. It’s the same feeling as when see a giant view from a hilltop or after a mountain hike and you look down at the landscape below – this is a WOW! that literally takes your breath away. The joy of seeing a big picture view of knowledge is what originally inspired Lloyd to write a sweeping book combining all history, natural and human, one that connects up all the dots of the past.

It stems from something Lloyd says is essential for the survival of all sighted creatures living in the wild. Just think about it, before people lived in towns and cities it was essential they had two views of the world – one targeted and precise, to make sure that they could hunt for food to survive, and another broad and big, so they could keep a wide-eyed lookout to make sure they do not become another creature’s lunch first!

**Wow 2. Visualisation**

The second WOW! happens when we learn things in a visual way. Strong visual design really helps tell stories in a way that brings it to life because human brains evolved to understand the world through images and sound not written words and numbers. Written words and numbers are modern inventions that have become common in most people’s lives only in the last few hundred years. Minds turn written words in into pictures using your IMAGEination. “Your brain is a text to image converter, that’s how it works,” says Lloyd. “When your brain sorts out its memories it does them it dreams in pictures not words and numbers!”.

**Wow 3. Discovery**

Lloyd’s third WOW! happens when we find out something that our friends or family do not know! “Our stone age ancestors used to roam the earth in groups of 20 or 30 individuals. In this world anyone who finds out special information that will improve the chances of survival of a small group of people – like a source of food or water or shelter – would be bound to have been congratulated as a superhero.” Lloyd says it is no surprise that the human brain has evolved a way of rewarding us when we discover things other people do not know. “Unfortunately, this can be particularly hard in traditional school settings when the teacher knows everything and the pupils can only get things right or wrong!”

**Wow 4. Choice**

Creatures most often learn things as a result of making mistakes – that’s learning through trial and error. But you can only make a mistake if you have a choice! A world full of choice is therefore a place brimming with potential excitement and joy. “Look at the index at the back of a book like ***Absolutely Everything!*** and *choose* the pages that most interest you. Dip in and out as you wish – or just read along from the beginning to the end – the important thing is that you *choose* - it’s entirely up to you!”

**Wow 5. Craft**

The final Wow! is conjured up when you learn using your hands. Ancient humans always had to use their hands to make tools, shelters and weapons. In those days, fine skills in hand-to-eye co-ordination literally made the difference between life and death. “So, again, our brains have evolved to get very excited when we use our hands whether it’s for making things, gesticulating wildly during a speech or clapping them together because someone has done good. All the time they are releasing a shot of joy.”

Christopher Lloyd is keen to work with broadcasters to follow the development of his educational ideas and to help show the short-fallings of traditional institutional approaches. For further information please contact [chris@whatonearthbooks.com](mailto:chris@whatonearthbooks.com).

For examples of his charismatic lecture style please see the following video links:

* The launch of ***Absolutely Everything!*** - <https://vimeo.com/292817363>
* A hisotyr of the world in 15 pockets: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti0AqVW-7B8&list=PLzDNXmNneXsw8dmqEIxWaj2rneo3BfiRN>
* Christopher Lloyd introducing What on Earth Books around the log fire: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTlYWarRVSw&t=484s>