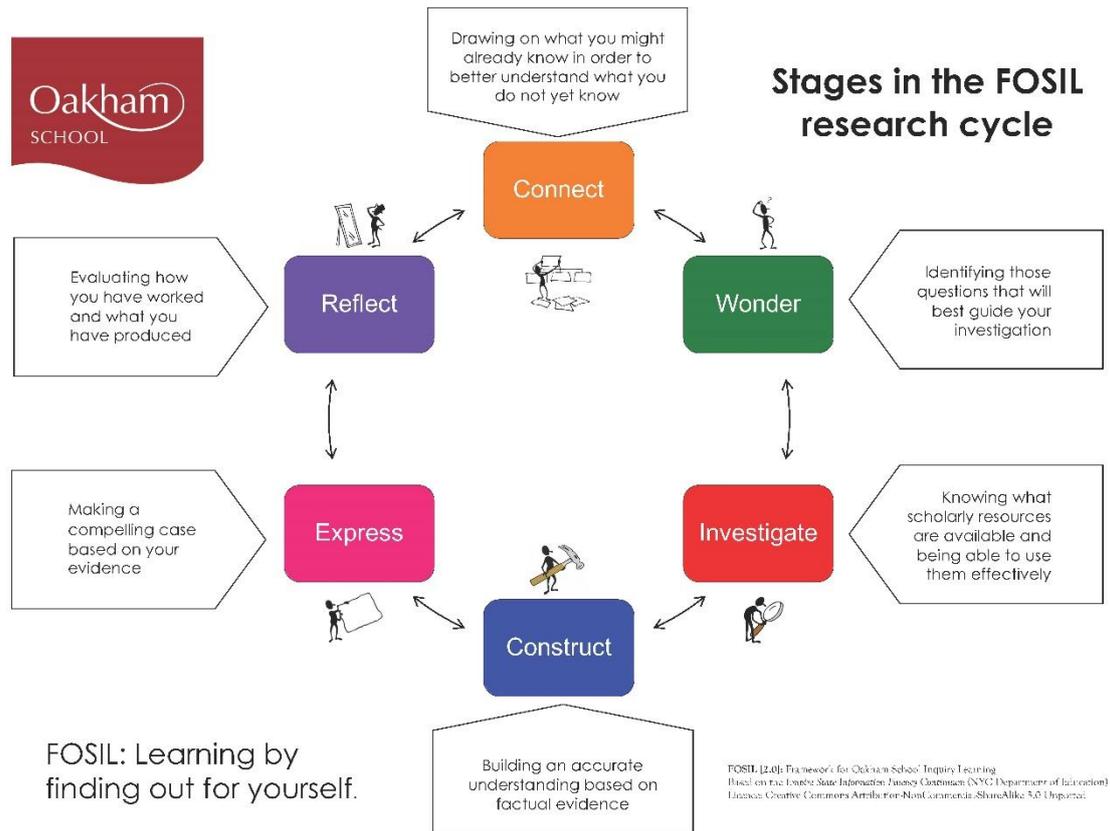


## Designing successful inquiries



### Successful inquiry design:

- rests on a clear understanding of the process (which starts with 'Connect' at the top), and on guidance and structure from the teacher to step students through this process. All stages are important, although you may choose to spend different amounts of time on each stage for different inquiries. Don't be tempted to skip the Connect and Wonder stages entirely, though, as they are vital for an effective Investigate phase.
- starts with an effective inquiry question (often called an "essential" question if you want to search for examples). This should be a question that it is not possible to just stick into Google and then copy and paste an answer. It should be interesting and, as far as possible, relevant to the students, and should not have just one right answer. e.g. "Should a wind farm be built in or near Oakham?" is likely to produce more thoughtful work than "what are the benefits of wind farms?"
- is focussed on the process not the product – where possible it often works better not to tell students before they begin their research what their product will be. That way they focus on gathering information to answer the question rather than fussing about the best layout/font/transitions to use and finding pretty pictures. Presentation does matter, but is best thought about once you actually have an informed point to make.
- requires planning and guidance in accessing suitable resources. Put yourself in the students' place during design and check age-appropriate resources are available – you might need to point students in particular directions. The Library can help you find suitable resources – print and electronic. We have a wide range of subscription databases alongside out print collections and are always keen to be involved in inquiry design and resourcing.
- Make expectations clear – e.g. as a school we are strongly committed to academic honesty, so all sources used should be referenced in some way ( age-appropriate guidance is in student organisers – as is guidance on using PPT and Word for academic work). Students need to know this before they start so that they can keep track of sources. Checklists and marking rubrics help – what are you looking for in the finished product?

FOSIL: Learning by finding out for yourself.

## Designing successful inquiries

Tips for successful **group interaction** during inquiry work:

- Everyone needs a specific role **at every stage**, whether assigned by the teacher or the groups themselves. Our experience is that if one person collects the information while the other makes the product, for example, each person spends one half the lesson waiting for the other to do something. A more efficient method would be to divide the inquiry into sub-questions for each member to look at, e.g.,
  - What sort of site is needed for a windfarm, (so where in Oakham could it go)?
  - What issues might a windfarm in Oakham cause?
  - What benefits might it bring to Oakham (who might benefit? How?)?
  - What difference could it make nationally? Globally? (Environmental benefits.)
  - Who would fund such a project?
  - What alternatives are there?
- There needs to be an easy way for group members to share their work – is it going to be a problem if a group member is absent and hasn't emailed the work to someone else? A OneNote Class notebook is ideal for this – it also allows you to track who has contributed what.
- Stages of the inquiry need to be carefully timed and managed to keep everyone focussed.

A well-designed inquiry provides multiple opportunities for differentiation – in terms of the level at which students are able to interact with the original question, the sub-questions they choose and the resources they choose to help themselves to answer the question. Our experience is that there are opportunities for students at all levels to stretch themselves and that both the most and least able find it a rewarding experience – and often exceed their own and our expectations.

Part of the role of the Library is to assist in designing inquiries as well as resourcing them – which can also include designing worksheets to help step students through the FOSIL cycle for your particular inquiry. The cycle is accompanied by an underlying framework of skills to enable us to build inquiry skills in a structured way as students progress up the school.

If you would like any further information or help with an inquiry, please come in and see us, or contact Darryl at [dt@oakham.rutland.sch.uk](mailto:dt@oakham.rutland.sch.uk) .