

# THE PROSODY LENS: STATE STANDARDS

The role of the school-based SLP is to support students who have communication disorders that adversely affect their educational performance. Students who experience challenges related to prosody may struggle both academically and socially. They can miss out on valuable information shared with them by conversational partners and in the classroom and can struggle to express their thoughts and feelings clearly.

Just as state standards guide the work of the classroom teacher, they also inform the SLP as they decide which communication challenges most significantly impact a student's education. The Speaking and Listening standards are almost wholly concerned with engaging in meaningful academic discussions with peers and adults about grade-level topics and are often impacted by prosody challenges. They focus on two main areas: Comprehension & Collaboration and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas.

## PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

These standards ask students to:

- ★ Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly
- ★ Present an opinion
- ★ Speak clearly at an understandable pace
- ★ Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks

Students with expressive prosody challenges may:

- ★ struggle to present information in a way that is appropriate to their audience
- ★ speak too loudly or too quietly
- ★ inappropriately use sarcasm  
sound like they are making a statement
- ★ when asking a question, or vice versa
- ★ struggle to emphasize words and phrases to indicate their feelings and emotions
- ★ have the vocabulary to express emotions but sound "flat."
- ★ struggle to understand the time and place for being loud or quiet



## COMPREHENSION & COLLABORATION



These standards ask students to:

- ★ Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade level topics and texts with peers and adults
- ★ Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions
- ★ Ask and answer questions for clarification and further explanation to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood

Students with prosody challenges may:

- ★ not understand a change in a message that is conveyed by a change in loudness or tone of voice
- ★ get confused when the pitch, volume, or tempo of speech changes
- ★ interpret things literally and not understand when others are using sarcasm
- ★ misinterpret someone's opinion or feelings on a topic
- ★ struggle to differentiate between questions and statements
- ★ have difficulty attaching importance to information during classroom presentations

If you notice that a student is struggling in any of the above areas, contact a speech-language pathologist and let them know that you have prosody concerns. They can help you better understand what's going on, advise you on how to best support the student in the classroom, and even evaluate and treat prosody challenges if warranted.

**PROSODY - IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY,  
IT'S HOW YOU SAY IT**