

Tools for Assessing Prosody

It is important that fluency is not viewed as just wcpm. Teachers need to include a measure of prosody to ensure fluency assessments are not just a measure of quick decoding (Reading Research Quarterly, 2010, p. 230-251). “NAEP defines fluency as the ease or naturalness of reading. The key elements include (a) grouping or **phrasing** of words as revealed through the intonation, stress, and pauses exhibited by readers; (b) adherence to author's **syntax**; and (c) **expressiveness** of the oral reading-interjecting a sense of feeling, anticipation, or characterization. Students at levels 3 and 4 are generally considered to be fluent, and those at levels 1 and 2 non-fluent,” NAEP (1995). Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, and Meisinger (2010) suggest using the NAEP's Integrated Reading Performance Record Oral Reading Fluency Scale to assess prosody:

Level 4: Reads primarily in large, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
Level 3: Reads primarily in three-or four-word phrase groups. Some smaller groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
Level 2: Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.
Level 1: Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-or-three-word phrases may occur-but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.
Note: From Listening to Children Read Aloud (p.15) by U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995, Washington, D.C: Author.

Since teachers should always teach for meaning, it is also important to continually assess student's comprehension through lesson assessments and additional comprehension measures such as an individual reading inventory.