

Patterns in Proficiency Standards on Tests of English-language Proficiency

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- All U.S. states must test assess the English-language proficiency (ELP) of their English-language learners (ELLs) under Title III law.
- Each state sets their own expectations of English-language proficiency, and students are expected to show growth.
- Although each state has its own ELP standards, ELP test, and proficiency expectations, there may be commonalities in the proficiency standards across states.

- To investigate the commonalities in the patterns of proficiency standards on ELP tests across states.

- Two methods were used to investigate the patterns in the proficiency standards of ELP tests, both expected and observed:
 - a focus group was conducted with standard setting panelists, discovering what patterns they expected in the proficiency standards for the ELP test in their state; and
 - the percentages of students classified in each proficiency level (*impact data*) on ELP tests in six states were compiled and examined.

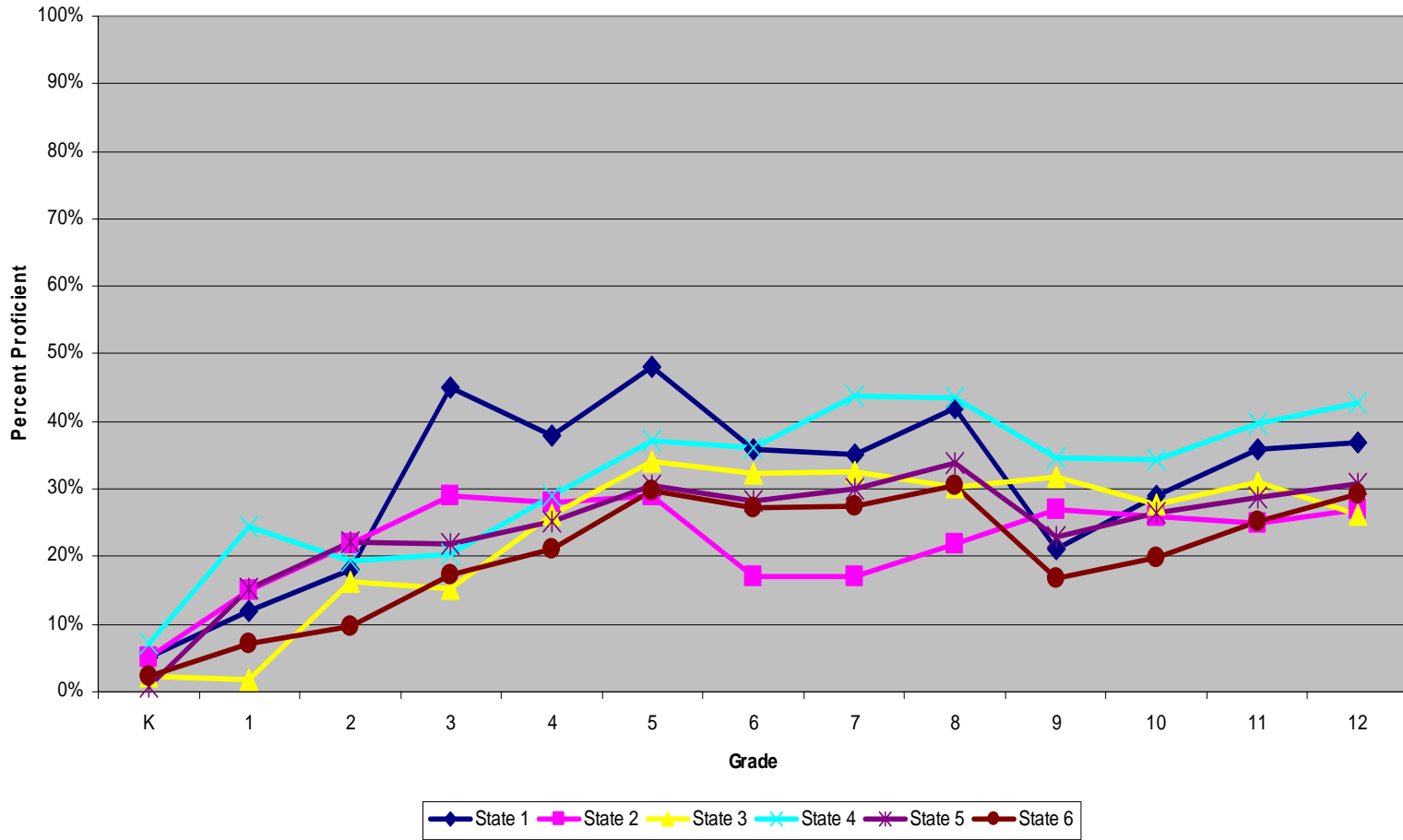
- A focus group was conducted in December 2007 with standard setting panelists before they recommended proficiency standards for the state ELP test.
 - All participants (N=6) were recruited as table leaders for an implementation of the Bookmark Standard Setting Procedure (Lewis, Mitzel, & Green, 1996).
 - The focus group was conducted prior to the beginning of any standard setting activities.
 - All focus group participants had direct experience with ELLs, ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

- Focus group participants expected:
 - fewer students to be classified in top proficiency levels in Reading and Writing in Grades K-2, but students to perform better by Grade 5;
 - levels of proficiency to be very different in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2;
 - Listening and Speaking proficiency to be fairly high in Grades 1 – 5;
 - Reading and Writing proficiency to level off in high school; and
 - a dip in proficiency at Grade 9.

- Six states were selected for the investigation.
- The percentages of students classified as Proficient, as defined by the state, were compiled.
- This investigation looks at the percent of students classified as Proficient on the state ELP test, but the proficiency determination typically takes into account more than just the overall or composite test score.

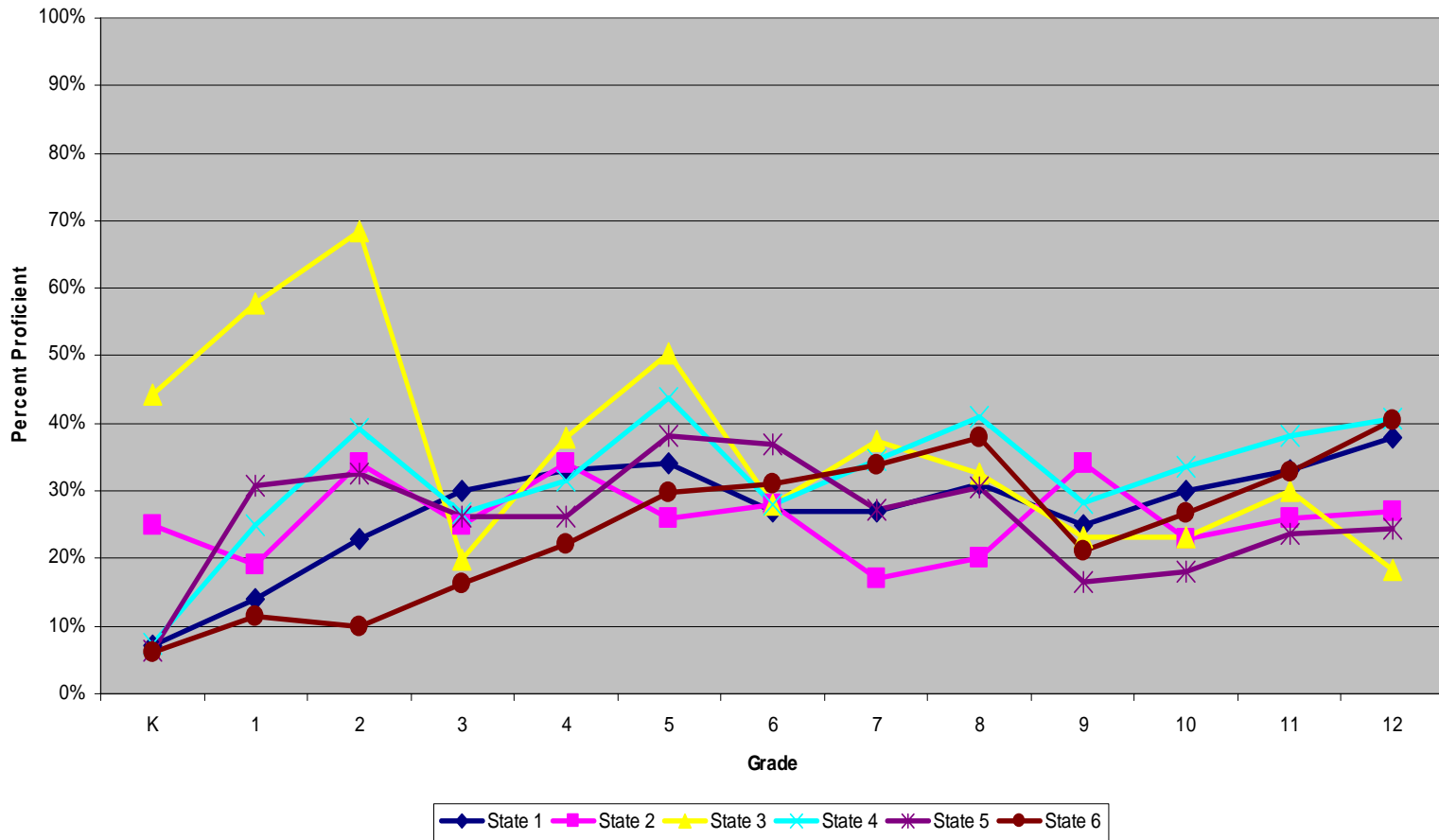
Overall Proficiency

Percent of Students Classified as Proficient on the State ELP Test



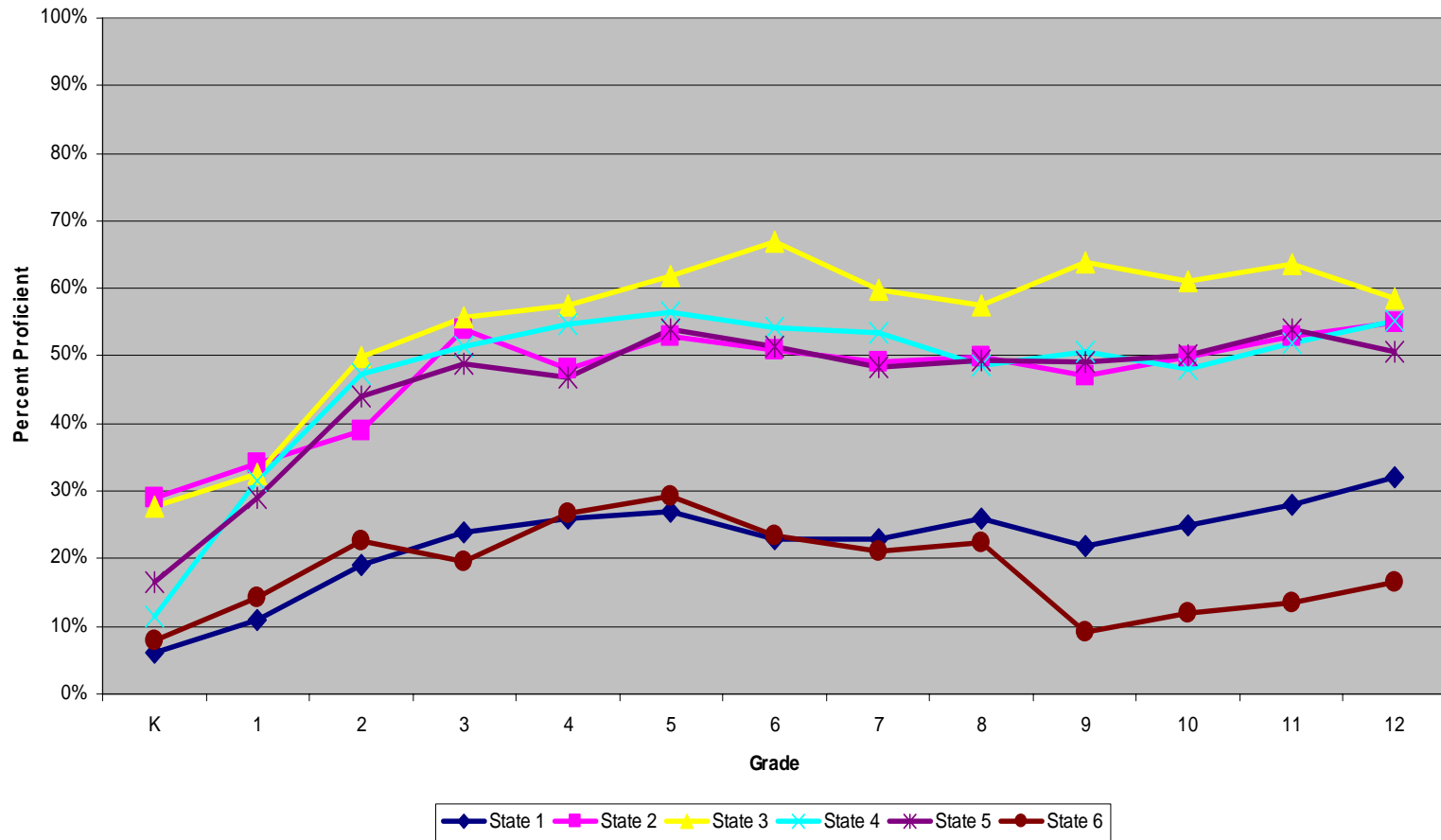
Listening Proficiency

Percent of Students Classified as Proficient in *Listening* on the State ELP Test



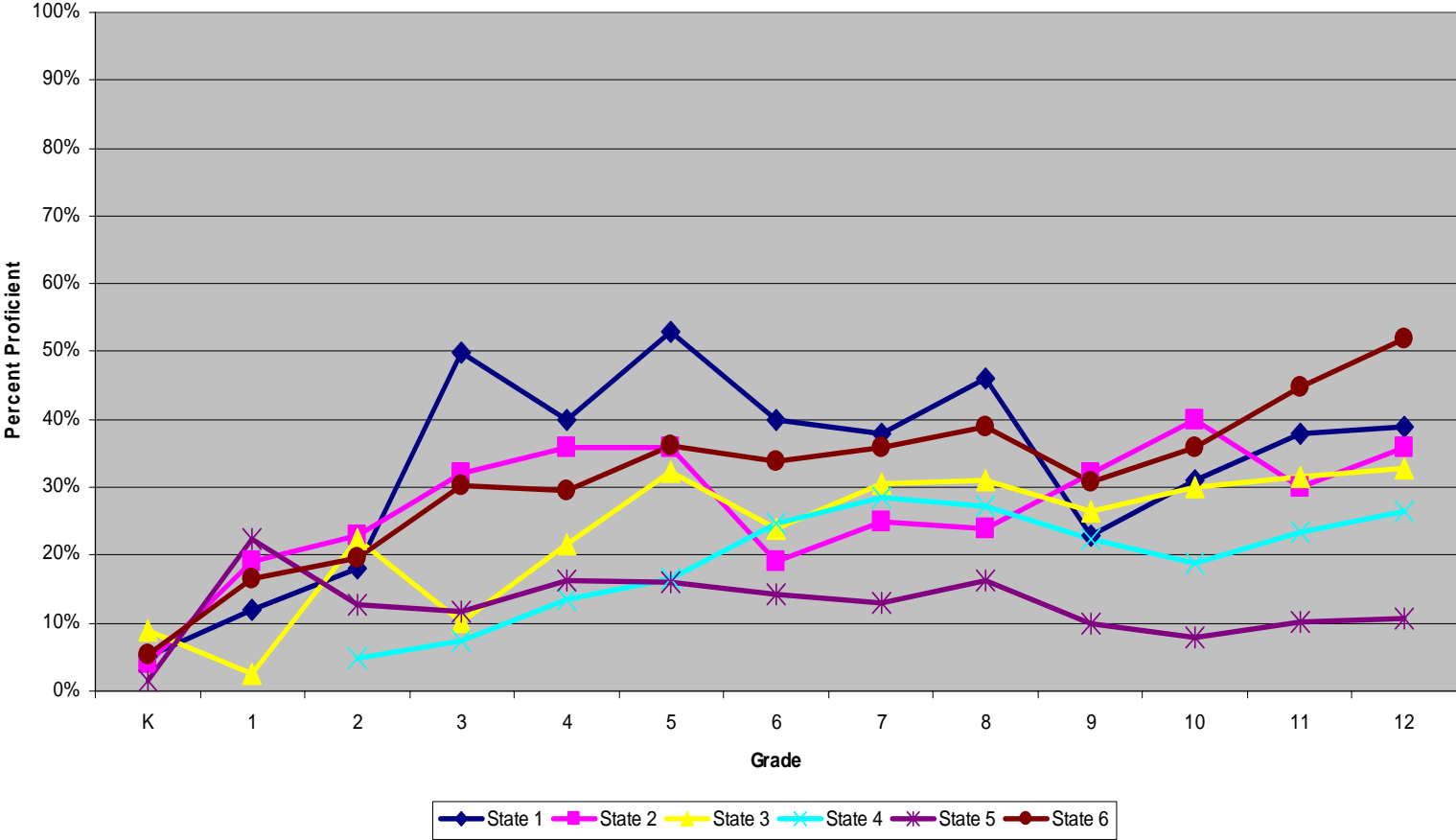
Speaking Proficiency

Percent of Students Classified as Proficient in *Speaking* on the State ELP Test

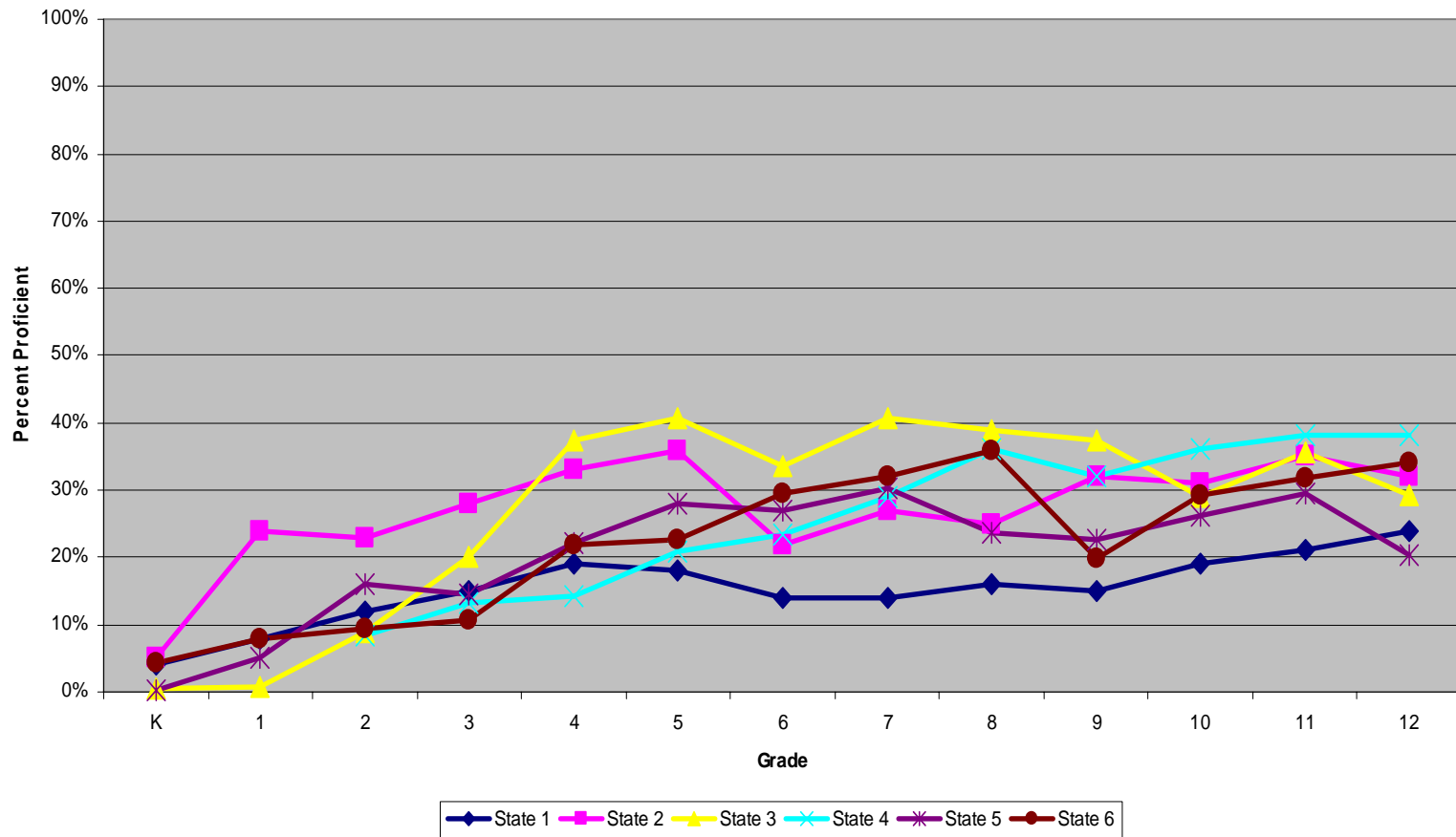


Reading Proficiency

Percent of Students Classified as Proficient in Reading on the State ELP Test



Percent of Students Classified as Proficient in *Writing* on the State ELP Test



- Four of the six of the states show a dip in Overall proficiency at Grade 9.
 - The others show declines in high school.
- Speaking shows the greatest rise in proficiency in the lower grades, and shows particular divergence across states.
- Writing shows very modest rises in proficiency in high school, and greater rises in lower grades.

- What is the nature of the dip in proficiency at Grade 9, and how can it be explained?
- Are there discernable patterns in the underlying cut scores themselves?
- Are the observations from the focus group indicative of educators in other places?
- How can states communicate these patterns to stakeholders in a meaningful way?