

*“Regrets are the natural property of grey hairs.” — Charles Dickens*

## Grouping learners

It is probably time to revisit how we group students. A quick review of the literature suggests the following alternatives:

**Peers** – Students stay with their age group throughout their school years. This results in a wide range of performance levels in each grade; it also increases pressure on standards and the likelihood of social promotion.

**Ability** – Students grouped by aptitudes for school studies; appears to lead to improved performance, however, it also has the potential for negative impact on a student’s self-esteem, especially for students in the “lower” level streams. A closer examination is necessary, however, the negative effect may be a labelling problem that could be readily offset by some restructuring of the curriculum.

**Setting** – It is a new term to the writer but results in each subject being divided into a number of levels with students taking the level they need irrespective of their age. The writer visited such a school where at 9:00 o’clock, all students studied English, with each student taking the level best suited to his or her own needs. At 10:00, students switched to mathematics and at 11:00, they switched to science. After lunch, students remained with peers for other studies.

**Independent programming** – “Groups of one person each” work with a learning manager and take advantage of learning opportunities both inside and outside school.

*Guest Editor: Don Glendenning*

## Coming soon

Eleven nominations for the Excellence in Education Award were received by the closing date of April 26; nominations are now being reviewed by the Selection Committee and a presentation is expected to be made by the beginning of June.

The Award in the amount of \$2,500, made possible through the generosity of an Island family, is based on the following five areas of engagement:

- Student to student;
- Student to teacher;
- Student to learning materials;
- Student to community partnerships; and
- Parental involvement.

## Trades training

The B.C. Government is changing the focus of education to reflect the Province’s need for skilled manpower. (Vancouver Sun: “Trades training in B.C.: Where is the money going?” by Tracy Sherlock.) The change includes a dramatic switch of funds to support of training for high demand jobs such as welding, nursing and engineering, and may even include a reallocation among schools.

Student aid will also be refocused to encourage British Columbians to enrol in high-demand programs and, after completion, move to communities designated as being underserved.