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*“Criterion-referenced testing is typically the most useful way to assess learning progress towards learning goals” – unknown*

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## School Achievement Levels

The Sydney Morning Herald of Saturday, July 22, 2015, carried an item based on a report by the Grattan Institute on the wide range of achievement levels in a typical classroom in Australian schools. In Math, for example, the range could be as much as 8 years. I’m told that the same applies to classrooms in PEI and results in both frustrated teachers and frustrated students. The article concludes, and I quote: “... it is not possible to remove the spread of grade levels and, therefore, teaching methods must be adjusted.”

There are at least two flaws in that line of thinking:

- **Grade level and achievement are not the same:** Grade levels are primarily administrative arrangements for counting students, recording the amount and nature of instruction provided, and the length of time students are under instruction. Achievement levels, on the other hand, refer to the level of learning reached in a field, subject or topic by a student irrespective of age, where learned or length of time spent in study.
- **Which constant?** Schools have a choice: set a standard and adjust the time needed to reach it, or set time limits and measure achievement in the time available. Schools have chosen to make time the constant; the result is varying levels of achievement.

Time or standards? Which is more important?

## Watch for

- **Educational support services** – A presentation by a Derek MacEwen and colleagues from the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture on curriculum development and support initiatives in public education.
- **What do teachers do?** You’ve seen the learning path; now let’s chart how teachers respond. We need a half-dozen teachers to initiate the discussion. Send me a note if you are interested.
- **Handle with Care** – TBA.

## BC Education News

### Education Excellence

The BC Minister of Education announced a plan recently to transform BC public education. Reform is based on five key elements: personalized learning for every student, quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, high standards and learning empowered by technology.

*Guest Editor: Don Glendenning*

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