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The Department of Education has been working on an Assessment Initiative for over three years, beginning with the release of *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind*. The focus has been on building awareness of the three purposes of assessment and on balancing their use to most effectively improve student learning. There is no doubt that assessment *for* and *as* learning have the most potential to improve student learning by increasing the amount and frequency of descriptive feedback and involving students in the process. However periodic assessment *of* learning plays an important role in confirming students' achievement of important learning outcomes. Provincial standards tests are one way of checking that achievement across the province, but the majority of student achievement evidence is collected in the classroom by teachers.

With more emphasis on assessment *for* and *as* learning and less emphasis on assessment *of* learning, classroom and provincial assessments *of* learning must be of high quality. MECYs recent document, *Communicating Student Learning*, provides specific guidelines for determining grades based on assessment *of* learning information that are meaningful, consistent, accurate and most supportive of further learning

(Source: Linda Thorlakson, Consultant, Assessment Branch, MECY)