

## A TEACHER REFLECTS



By studying the effects of scale on the appearance of a graph, the students quickly saw that they could dramatically affect its apparent meaning. They took this one step further and began making graphs of various types of information that they could use to their advantage. One student eventually made a graph that tried to show that the number of hours students watched television actually had very little effect on grades. He found a graph in a newspaper article that showed a nationwide study coming to the opposite conclusion, but tried to minimize its effect by placing the GPA coordinates very close together so that the differences appeared insignificant. I was impressed both with his ingenuity and the depth of understanding that had allowed him to transform the original graph into something that showed an apparently different result.

The next lessons interested the students particularly as they analyzed the differences between adults and students in different areas. It sparked discussions of the results on various topics. Although some of the discussions really did not contribute to their understanding of the math concepts, they certainly were involving for the students. I saw some students come alive in math as they very rarely had in the past.

Heightened interest continued as we moved on to the last lesson in this phase and continued the discussion of adult vs. student opinions and interests. As students prepared for their second

survey, most had pretty strong predictions of what the results would be. Because of the discussions that had gone on about this topic in general, I had them make graphs predicting their results before they actually conducted their survey. This proved a good idea as students strove afterwards to explain away their inaccurate predictions or basked in their knowledge of predictable adults.

