

A TEACHER REFLECTS



Students in my class were intrigued with the activities in the first lesson of this unit: finding the best buy when considering different size packages and comparing prices of different brands. They knew some of their favorite snack items were expensive but hadn't thought about ways of reasonably comparing prices. It certainly had not occurred to them that the price of an item may vary with the size of the package. As a homework assignment, I asked them to go to a grocery store and note the prices and sizes of several packaged items. Some of their families regularly shopped at warehouse-type stores and purchased large packages of staple items. On the day that students brought in their results and began doing the math to determine cost per item, they were rather surprised to discover that the larger item was not always cheaper. Students discussed shopping considerations and recognized that price is not always the only criterion. Students brought up that size of the family made a difference in what size items were purchased. I was also pleased that some students connected this lesson to our study of landfill and recycling, recognizing that buying one or two large items ultimately added less waste to landfills than purchasing several smaller items.

It was interesting to hear the discussions among the students as they did their calculations. Probably for the first time, they were really looking at the items they ate regularly and comparing them. One student began pointing out differences in size and wondering if direct comparisons could be made between a small cookie and a very large one. Although we had decided to concentrate on price per item for this project and had discussed appropriate items, a few students had collected information on cereal and potato chips. They were hard put to determine the price per item. There was a rather heated discussion between two students about whether they should divide by the number of servings that were indicated on the packages or if it would be better to use the total number of ounces. Most students were really not familiar with ounces as a unit of measure and had little intuitive sense of how many ounces they would be likely to eat at a time. A couple of other students ended up measuring out a serving. When they saw the size of the servings, they decided to use ounces because they agreed that most of them ate more than what the package said was a serving. Students agreed that using ounces would give a more consistent measure of cost.