

A TEACHER REFLECTS



Sharing the Final Projects

On the day the projects were due, my students came in with elaborate, colorful, simulation game boards, and an endless supply of enthusiasm. They were eager to have their games played and to play their classmates' games.

I requested help from the class to create a system for testing the simulation games. They quickly rejected a formal approach. So, I let them choose how they wanted to work and with whom. After the games were set up, I placed sheets next to each one for students to give each other feedback on the simulations.

They had a terrific time playing each other's games. Most students chose to work with the same pair or group of three and played each other's games. Some went around the room, alone or with a friend, and tried out different games. As I watched, I noticed that my room had the feeling of a carnival. We started the unit with the Carnival Collection, and ended it with our own carnival. The difference was that the students' games now became the various booths.

I was really impressed with the range of topics—basketball, baseball, soccer, Monopoly®, an invented bowling-like game, toss-the-ball-in-a-cup, pro tennis, walking a dog, traffic jam, sailing, skateboarding, “scurf boarding,” snow boarding, and dancing. Students used an assortment of pieces in their games—colored chips, spinners, and number cubes.

Given the amount of effort students had put forth and how much they had learned, I would have been happy if this was strictly a fun period. As a bonus for me, students were really thinking about the games as they played and taking the sheets seriously. They were giving oral feedback to the game designers and writing their comments on the sheets. Some revised their games as they played and discovered problems. Others would be able to go away with a stack of completed sheets to help them reflect on their projects.

It was obvious that my students were very proud of their games. So was I. I had set high expectations for their final projects, encouraged them to make their games “spectacular,” and they did!