

A TEACHER REFLECTS



As we began this unit, three special-education students were placed in my class. This was my first experience with mainstreaming and I was concerned that the students be successful. I was also worried because the students did not have a lot of extra help. While I knew that spatial relations (especially visualizing cross sections) would be difficult for these students, I also felt that mastering these skills could help them in a wide variety of areas. I was concerned about my ability to adapt the unit effectively for them without isolating them from the class. In looking through the unit, I decided that some adaptations could be made for the whole class that might also be helpful to these students.

So, when Lesson 1 started with a reference to flattening cardboard cartons for recycling, I had several cartons available. I had students flatten the boxes, creating nets, and then put them back together again. I thought this physical demonstration would help Leandro, Hamilton, and Emily to understand the idea of a net, and the process took only a few minutes. When we were ready to start writing, I had them work with a partner, and wrote some words on the board that anyone could use to get started.

Because I knew that these students had poor small-motor coordination, I didn't think they could manipulate the small-size nets on the reproducible. I enlarged the nets and copied them on heavier paper. Once I had done this, I decided to have all the students use the larger

nets rather than singling out these students. Hamilton, Leandro, and Emily put their nets together without a lot of difficulty, though they weren't as neat in appearance as some of the others. After their first attempts, I pointed out the solids came out looking better if the folds were scored first.

I had decided beforehand that although I wanted all three to participate in every lesson, they need not go through all the steps. I didn't think that any of them would be able to draw a net for a cube themselves. Leandro simply unfolded his own cube and used it to trace another net and Hamilton and Emily did the same. For the first lesson, I was pleased that things were going so well.

At this point, I felt that Hamilton, Leandro, and Emily needed more practice in working with nets. I had a student create some nets that folded into a cube and others that didn't and had the three students fold each to see which ones did. Then they traced the correct ones.

I didn't know whether any of them would be able to think visually enough to look at small flat nets and judge them. However, Hamilton correctly identified one of the nets that could not be folded into a cube. I asked how he knew, and he said all the parts had to be the same size. Although this lesson proved to be easier than others as the unit progressed, the initial success of these three students gave them confidence for the rest of the unit.