

A TEACHER REFLECTS



As we approached the end of the unit, I looked for a way to have students share with others the knowledge they had gained. In addition to the reports they were doing as a part of Lesson 10, I asked them if they wanted to do a presentation in one of the fifth grade classes explaining solids and showing some of what they knew. I told them the class could make the choice about whether or not they wanted to do this extra activity, but that if they chose to do it, I expected that they would demonstrate creativity in their presentation and make it entertaining for the fifth graders, but at the same time cover the basic math information. This class enjoyed drama and had a lot of outspoken kids, and I wasn't surprised when they decided they wanted to do a skit.

I let José and Julia get the presentation organized since they were enthusiastic and the kids were responding well to them. They discussed building large models of each figure. One of the students, Joan, suggested having kids dress up as each figure. This idea was greeted enthusiastically at first. I didn't want them to spend a lot of extra time on something that wasn't practical but I didn't want to say no either, so I asked them what they would make their costumes from. Bev said it would be hard to get the pyramids to come to a point and how were the students supposed to see or move anyway? They started arguing about where the materials would come from. The discussion threatened to disintegrate into chaos, and I did

intervene again, saying we needed to make a decision. Students gave their last minute arguments, but the class voted that wearing their solid would be too impractical.

José suggested that each student should be responsible for creating a solid and decorating it however they wanted so the 5th graders could see larger and more interesting shapes than the wooden ones we had used. This met with agreement almost immediately. I asked how they were going to show volume and surface area. Marian suggested using double stick tape over the boxes to attach centimeter square paper so it could be pulled off and on again. Joe asked about volume, and Heather suggested that we demonstrate volume with popcorn, which the students could then eat. Students vetoed that because they didn't want to eat popcorn that people had been handling. One student said his family had a lot of packing material at home and we could use that.

In the final presentation, all students who had one type of solid stood at the front and introduced themselves and their solid. Then they demonstrated finding the surface area and volume. The next group then came up and did the same. At the end, my class had various students come to the front while the class named the solid they had. The eighth graders were pleased when the fifth graders did well on this "test." We spent a couple of class days preparing what we would say and do; but the students' learning was reinforced and they gained other skills as well.