

A TEACHER REFLECTS



Students loved the guess-and-check method for finding target numbers. They never seemed to tire of trying it again and getting closer. They also liked the ease of using the repeated addition and multiplication feature on their calculators, so they were willing to keep experimenting. We spent three days working on these, sharing answers as we worked. A couple of students found the actual formulas—but most were not that interested at this time. It amazed me that some of them were able to come up with the formula for multiplication growth even though there were many steps. It is difficult to explain how you can do this on the Explorer calculators. The students who had the TI-34 were able to perform these better with a clearer understanding of what they were doing. I was really glad to have the Explorer calculator overhead through all this. Discovering that the multiplication growth number was the same for three steps was most enlightening to many students. They were eager to move on to working with algebraic symbols for growth numbers.

By now, there seemed to be a need to give an example relating to students' lives to help them see why forecasts and predictions are important. I was lucky enough to find an example close to home. Several years ago my son decided that, instead of getting a part-time job in a fast-food shop, he would go into the tee-shirt business. He designed a shirt, but had to predict how many to have printed and what to charge. He wondered if a small group of friends would buy his shirts and then buy another when the first one wore out (addition model) or if his friends would wear the shirt and others would see it and want one too (multiplication model). This example was of high interest to my students (as well as the fact that I had the actual shirt to show them), and they had some lively discussions about the validity of his predictions.