

## ANALYZING OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

| Purpose         | The purpose of this activity is to share and demonstrate how to analyze open-<br>ended responses from administered questionnaires.  |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Target Audience | Committee of teachers.  |  |
| Time            | One hour.   |  |
| Materials       | Hard copies of the open-ended questionnaire responses, or computer files; computer on which to record and aggregate responses.  |  |
| Overview        | Open-ended questions should not be overlooked when assessing perceptions of<br>the learning environment. While open-ended responses to questions are very<br>time-consuming to compile or aggregate, one can get a complete sense of the<br>learning environment by asking students, for instance, two questions: |  |
|                 | What do you like about this school?   |  |
|                 | What do you wish was different?   |  |
|                 | Or, asking students, staff, and parents, these two questions-   |  |
|                 | • What are the strengths of this school?  |  |
|                 |   |  |

• What would make the school better?

Staff need to be clear on the most common responses; so instead of guessing, they need to aggregate the responses to know how many respondents said the same thing.

## **Process Protocol**

There is no fast or automated way to analyze open-ended responses. The best way to analyze open-ended responses is to take the list of open-ended responses, review the responses, and tally the number of times students said the same thing. Place the number in parentheses after the statement, eliminate the duplicates, and revise your list. You will need to make judgment calls about how to collapse the items when parts of the responses are different. The table on the next page, *Aggregating Open-ended Responses*, shows the open-ended response list in the left-hand column. The other column shows how the list can be condensed. The right-hand column, labeled "Add Descriptors," shows the number of times teachers were mentioned and in parentheses indicates the descriptions and the number of times the descriptors were mentioned. For example:

• Teachers (6) (caring, 3; nice, 2; good, 1)



An example of what the aggregated open-ended responses would look like is shown in Figure C4-2.



## Figure C4-2 AGGREGATED OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

| All Responses   |                                 | Aggregated Responses                                      |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| I like the caring teachers and the friendly school      |                                 |   |
| I like that our school is new and the teachers are nice |                                 | way of learning, 1)<br>The school (3) (e.g., friendly, 1; |
| I have a good teacher and friends<br>who treat me nice  |                                 | new, 1; nice, 1)<br>My friends (3) (e.g., treat me        |
| I like the way teachers make us<br>learn things         |                                 | nice, 1)<br>Music (2),                                    |
| I feel safe and treated with respect from teachers      | Eliminate                       | My classes (2)  |
| I like my teacher and the principal                     | Duplicates, Add<br>Descriptors, | The principal (2)   |
| My teacher treats me with respect                       | and Rank                        | Recess (2) (e.g., playground equipment, 1)                |
| I like my friends and my nice teacher                   | Order                           | Not too much homework                                     |
| I really like our new principal and my friends          |                                 | Social Studies, Math, P.E., Reading                       |
| We have a nice school                                   |                                 |   |
| I like recess, social studies, P.E.,<br>and music       |                                 |   |
| I like recess and the slide and the swings              |                                 |   |
| I like reading and music and math                       |                                 |   |
| Not too much homework                                   |                                 |   |

## **Comments to the Facilitator**

Open-ended responses are very helpful in painting the picture of the school. It is important to capture the feelings of the respondents as the responses are aggregated. Make sure responses are aggregated before staff members review the questionnaire results.