



ANALYZING OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Purpose The purpose of this activity is to share and demonstrate how to analyze open-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 the learning environment. While open-ended responses to questions are very time-consuming to compile or aggregate, one can get a complete sense of the 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?*

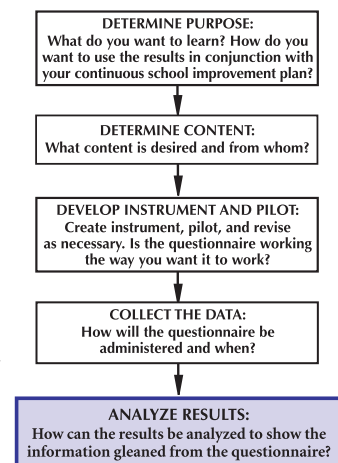
Staff need to be clear on the most common responses; so instead of guessing, they need to aggregate the responses to know how many respondents said the same thing.

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:

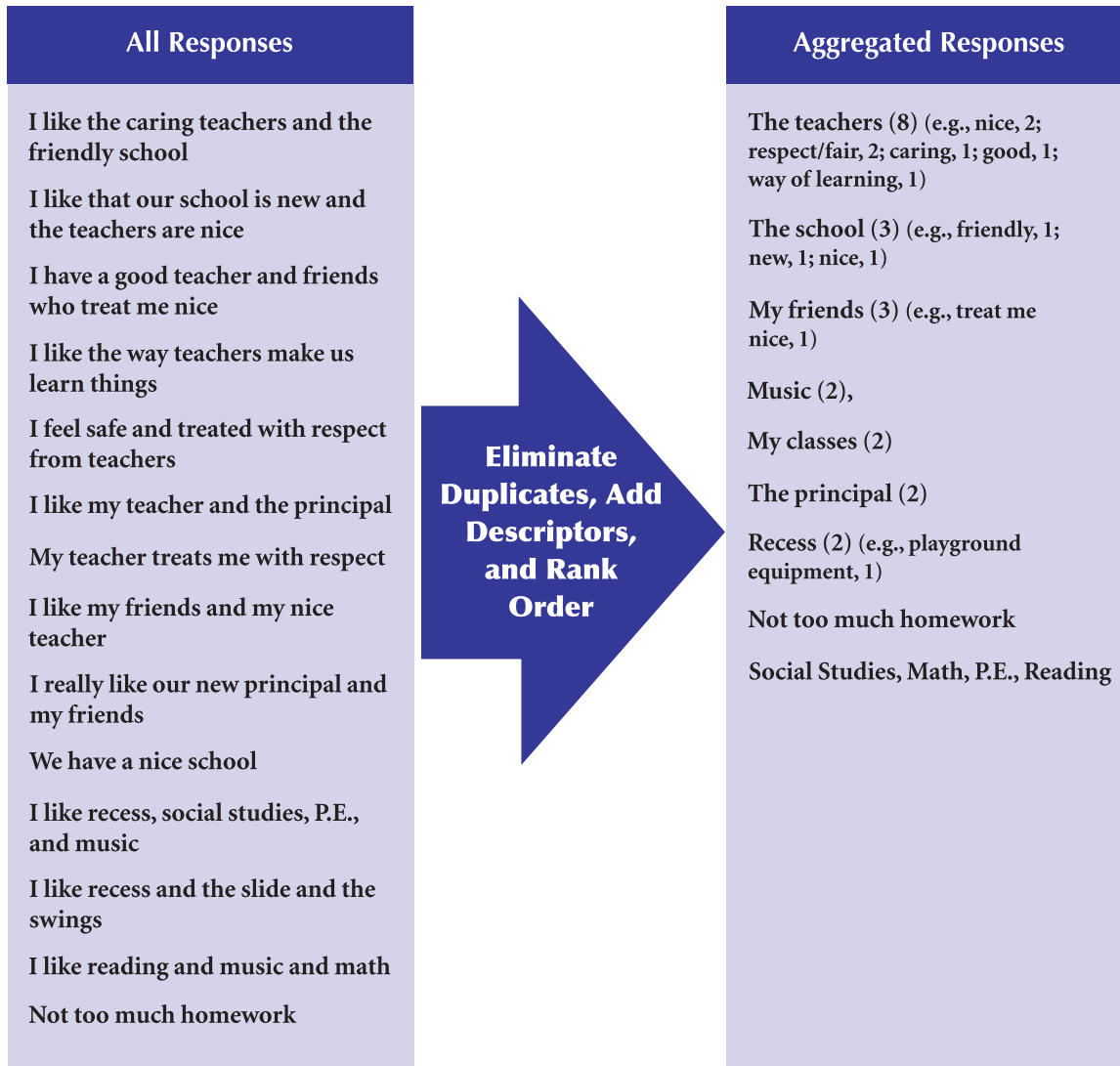
- ◆ Teachers (6) (caring, 3; nice, 2; good, 1)

Figure C4-1



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



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.

Reference: Excerpts taken from from V.L. Bernhardt & B.J. Geise (2009). *Questions to Actions: Using Questionnaire Data for Continuous School Improvement*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education, Inc.