GUIDING THE PRETEEN

NAME __________________________
CLUB __________________________
BIRTHDATE ______________________
YEARS IN PROJECT ______
YEARS IN 4-H ______

Unit III:
Guiding and Teaching Boys and Girls
(recommended for ages 15 and over)

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Cover design and illustrations by Lynda E. Chandler
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to “Guiding and Teaching Children,” Unit Three of Understanding the Preteen. If you have completed Units One and Two and you are enrolling in Unit Three, you must be genuinely interested in preteens. That is good because children of this age group especially need to know that people are interested in their world. They don’t always want us to be part of that world, but they like to think that we care.

Hopefully, in the first two units, you learned a great deal about preteens, about yourself and about people in general. As was pointed out in the introduction to Unit One, you probably have learned things about human skills, attitudes and behaviors that only you can really appreciate; as you learned through your own experiences in the activities. Those experiences would be difficult to duplicate or demonstrate for others.

Now you are prepared and eager to gain more experiences and to learn even more about preteens, yourself and others. This unit will focus on more specific skills and understandings needed for teaching and guiding preteens.

Project Pointers

- This project may be taken individually or as a member of a project group. However, it will be much more enjoyable and you will learn more if you can take it as a part of a project group. Should you have to take the project alone, it will be helpful for you to have a willing adult adviser—someone who can help you with suggestions, activities and with whom you can discuss activities and study topics. Your project leader or adviser should have a copy of the leader’s manual and the project manual.
- The activities required by this project will require some time and some careful planning. So get started soon!
- It is suggested that this project be completed within a 6 to 12 week time span. Also your project group should meet 6 to 12 times and try to have educational programs at three or four of the project meetings. These programs should be in addition to your regular sharing, reporting and discussion sessions that are related directly to the activities or to the material in the manual. The leader’s manual has suggestions for educational programs.
- The subject matter or content of this manual is not divided into chapters or lessons. Hopefully this will allow and encourage your project group and your project leader to determine the sequence of study and project meeting lessons that best fits your situation.

Suggestions for Illustrated Talks or Demonstrations

As a teen 4-H member an important part of your educational experience could be the opportunity to speak before other groups of people. This experience helps one to develop poise, self-confidence and leadership skills.

If you get the chance to take part in such events the following are some suggested topics:
- Preteens and Parent Relations
- Coping with Preteen Brothers and/or Sisters
- Preteens and Responsibilities
- Special Health Needs of Preteens
- The Preteen as a Group Member
- Special Likes and Dislikes of Preteens
- The Handicapped Preteen—Special Needs
- Nutrition Needs of the Preteen
- Appropriate Sports and Games for the Preteen

Learn more about preteens.
The Preteen's Need for Sex Education

The above are merely suggestions. Feel free to use your own topics of interest and teaching techniques.

**Why Take this Project?**

All people have their own personal reasons for doing things. We are motivated or pushed into action by the desire to fulfill certain needs. You will have your own reasons for taking this project.

Below are several reasons for taking this project or ideas relating to what one can expect to learn from it. Read these items carefully and give each one some consideration. Some of them may not seem to fit in with your own personal reasons, but by making yourself aware of the possibilities mentioned you will be alerting yourself to new things that you might learn. This will help prepare you mentally to get the most out of your efforts and activities.

Gain valuable experience for teaching or coaching.
Reasons for Taking the Project

Leading Youth Groups
Examples: 4-H Project Groups
4-H Clubs
4-H Junior Leadership
Little League, etc.
Girl Scouts
Campfire Girls
Boy Scouts
Recreational Programs
Camp Counseling
Church Youth Groups

The preadolescent age range (roughly 9-12) is the age at which kids are most interested in being part of organized groups. It is the age of belonging to clubs, gangs, cliques and so forth.

A better understanding of the age group will be most helpful for any person who is interested in a leadership role with boys and girls.

Developing Your Qualities of Leadership

We learn best by doing, so we learn leadership best by leading. We learn through the real experience of guiding and being responsible for the leadership of another group.

Becoming Capable Parents

There are many resources available for helping parents understand and deal with babies and young children. But babies and young children soon grow into school-age youngsters. This is a critical stage of life during which adjustment problems of the teen years and of later life begin to make themselves known. There is a need for parents and others to have a better understanding of the preteen age group.

Social Work as a Career

Counseling
Churchwork

Ministry
Recreational Work
Psychology
Social Services
Public Health
The Healing Arts (physicians, nurses, etc.)
Many others

Many occupations or careers require individuals who are understanding, tolerant and supportive of the personal needs of others. Only by working with or for the benefit of others can one gain this type of experience.

Teaching or Coaching as a Career

We learn to teach best by teaching, to coach best by coaching. Sincere teachers and coaches learn as much as, or more than, their students. Not only do they learn more about teaching but they also learn more about the subjects they are teaching.

Self-Development, Self-Growth and Self-Understanding

We all strive to know ourselves better. We all need to know ourselves better. Through a better understanding of others we come to understand where we came from and how we came to be what we are now.

Just Because the Topic Interests You

If this is one of your reasons (or your only reason) for taking this project, then it is reason enough. All people have interests of various sorts, and we are not always able to express or articulate (put into words) why we are interested in something. Sometimes we just are! By pursuing that interest we not only enjoy ourselves and fulfill a personal need, but we often discover the reason for our initial interest, thus learning something else about ourselves.

Ask Yourself

You have just read the section entitled “Why Take this Project?” Now review your written responses to that section in Units One and Two of this project.

1. Explain how your understanding of preteens has changed since you began Unit One of this project.
2. Explain how your self-understanding has changed since you began Unit Two.

3. After having taken Units One and Two, what are your reasons for taking this unit (Unit Three)?

Winning the Respect of Your Group Members

Any person who hopes to be a successful teacher, guide or leader of others needs to have the respect of the group members. If people respect you that means that they have positive feelings and opinions about you. They have a high regard for you as a person. They hold you in high esteem. When you are respected by the members of your group they will be more attentive, more willing to cooperate, easier to motivate and much more enjoyable.

Each individual is different in terms of personality traits and qualities of leadership. With the experiences you have gained up to now, you probably are beginning to realize what your own natural abilities and traits are. From that knowledge you can begin to improve on what you consider to be your weaker points and you can begin to take advantage of your stronger points.

Although each individual is different in teaching and leadership styles, all leaders share in common a need for the respect of their group members. The more respect the better, of course. Following are some very basic characteristics that a leader needs to have or develop. These characteristics, if cultivated well, will go a long way towards earning the respect of children. Give each one of them your careful consideration in relation to your own style of leading and guiding groups.

Firmness

Until a child learns self-discipline and self-control, he or she will need and want the guiding hand of a leader. This may not always seem obvious from the outward behavior of children. However, in general and in the long run, children will respect one who is firm in his or her efforts at guiding and managing a group.

Fairness

Children will admire leaders who are fair to themselves, to the rules that are necessary, to the individual child and to others. Being “fair” is not always easy in the complex affairs of humans. But the preteen is at a stage of development where fairness and justice seem very important. They need leaders who make honest and sincere efforts to be fair.

Helpfulness

Children want leaders who are knowledgeable in the subject matter being taught and leaders who are good at teaching and making themselves understood. But even more importantly they truly respect the person who tries to be helpful by showing a sincere interest in their feelings and needs for self-fulfillment.

Challenges

The leader who challenges the child’s ambition, skill and imagination will gain a friend. Each challenge should be a bit beyond the child’s everyday achievement, but not so far beyond that it seems impossible to reach. With each challenge, provide a good dose of encouragement.

Cheerfulness

Children need to feel that the adults around them are confident, competent and happy in solving the problems of living. Above all they respect the leaders who face bad times with good humor, faith and assurance. The final proof that a leader is “grown-up” is the ability to laugh at one’s self or take a joke on one’s self.
# How Well Do You Communicate

One who teaches or leads others should be able to communicate clearly his or her own messages, feelings, ideas and information. Good communication is a two-way process. One should also be able to understand what the individuals in the group try to communicate. They have various ways of expressing their needs.

The following checklist of personal communication habits can give you some insights into your own habits of communicating!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you encourage responses from other people to determine whether you are being understood?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you merely assume that other people know what you are trying to say without really explaining what you mean?</td>
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<td>3. Are you aware of how your tone of voice may affect others?</td>
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<td>4. Do you find it difficult to express your ideas when they differ from those around you?</td>
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<td>5. Following a misunderstanding with someone do you later try to correct the misunderstanding?</td>
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<td>6. Do you find it difficult to accept constructive criticism from others?</td>
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<td>7. Do you fail to express disagreement with others because you are afraid they will get angry?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Is it difficult for you to express positive feelings towards others?</td>
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<td>9. Is it difficult for you to trust others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you help others to understand you by saying how you think, feel and believe?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. In conversation, do you let the other person finish talking before responding to what he or she is saying?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Do you try to listen for a person’s full meaning when they are talking?</td>
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<td>13. Do you usually like a person even though his or her behavior differs from yours?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. In a discussion or conversation do you try to see things from the other person’s point of view?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. In conversation are you aware of the other means of communication such as gestures, mannerisms, facial expressions and silence?</td>
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If you gave thoughtful consideration to the items above, you should have become more aware of your own habits in interpersonal communication. Most of us have room for some improvement. So if you weren’t pleased with all the answers you gave, don’t be too hard on yourself.

Exercises such as this one are intended to help us know ourselves better so that we can work toward improvement. That’s what this project is all about.

Ideal answers to the questions would be “YES” to numbers 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15; and “NO” to numbers 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9. In reality, the answer most given is probably “SOMETIMES”.

7
Improving Your Listening Skills

In order to communicate well one must be able to listen well. Effective listening is at least half of good communication. Effective listening skills are especially important to those who try to teach, lead or guide others. Only by listening actively and effectively can we understand others and know what their needs are. Can you imagine understanding a 12-year-old without ever really listening to him or her?

When we speak or attempt to put across our own ideas, feelings or thoughts, we are very intent and very involved. When we listen or try to understand the ideas, feelings or thoughts of others, we should be just as intent and just as involved.

Study the following suggestions or tips. They can improve your skills in active, effective listening and help you to better understand others—not just their words.

1. *Stop talking*—you can't listen while you are talking.
2. *Put the speaker at ease*—help them feel that they are free to talk.
3. *Show the person that you want to listen*—look and act interested. Get rid of distractions.
4. *Look at the other person*—the person's face, hands and posture all help communicate.
5. *Empathize with the speaker*—try to put yourself in the other's place. It will help you understand that person.
6. *Concentrate on what the speaker is saying*—focus your attention on the person's ideas and feelings as they relate to the topic.
7. *Avoid jumping ahead*—you can listen and think much faster than another person can talk. Use the time difference to fully interpret and remember what has been said.
8. *Listen to how things are said*—the person's attitudes and emotional reactions may be more important than what is said in so many words.
9. *Share responsibility for communication*—you, the listener, have an important part. Try to understand. If you don't understand, ask for clarification. But don't give up too soon or interrupt. Give the person time to express what they have to say.
10. *Leave your personal problems behind*—try to leave your personal worries, fears, anxieties or problems out of the situation. They will hinder your efforts to listen well.

Learning and Teaching

Teaching or helping others to learn is not a simple or easy task. It can be enjoyable and very rewarding if one is reasonably capable. But let's remember that we never actually teach anyone anything. As a teacher, leader or guide our best efforts are put into arranging situations or setting stages in which learning can take place in the mind of the individual.

Learning is always taking place in a child's mind. So this means that a teacher or leader wants to arrange an environment that will focus attention on a certain chosen area of learning. If you want to "teach" first aid or rifle safety or principles of good nutrition, you need to arrange for the focus of the group's attention to be on that topic.

Whatever one hopes to help others learn, there are a few basic principles of learning that are helpful to keep in mind. With experience you will pick up other ideas that will be helpful.

Some Principles of Learning

Learning is made easier and is more likely to be permanent when:

1. The learner is motivated by having a personal interest in or something to gain from the activity.
2. The learning is appropriate to the learner's physical, intellectual and emotional levels of maturity and ability.
3. The learner can see and understand the relationships between the activity and the goals or purposes.
4. The learner has some way of knowing what progress he or she is making.

Methods of Teaching

There are many good methods or techniques of helping people learn. The methods or techniques that you use should depend upon the situation. In selecting appropriate methods here are some factors you will want to consider:
The age range of the group members.
The type of subject to be taught.
The facilities and equipment available.
The amount of time available.
The sex of the group members. Are they mixed or all girls or all boys?
The teaching aids and resources available.
The number of kids in the group.
Your own talents, skills, abilities and limitations.

After you have given consideration to your total teaching situation you may choose to use one or more of several teaching techniques such as:
group activities
reports
lectures
demonstrations
trips or tours
films or movies
chalk or flannel board presentations
show and tell
group discussion
guest speakers
exhibits
and others

Perhaps you will find that a couple of specific methods seem to work best for you. If so it will be natural to want to use them most of the time. But always remember that learning is more exciting and more enjoyable for people when they see some variety in the teaching methods used.

The Preteen: Planning and Decision-Making

In most groups or activities for preteen youngsters there are occasions when the members take part in the planning and making of decisions. This is part of their education. It is an experience they need in growing up and developing their own feelings of being adequate, worthwhile individuals. Some successful experiences along this line help to build their feelings of self-esteem and self-worth.

Children do respect leaders who offer them challenges, but the challenges should be realistic—things that can be achieved. In the areas of planning and decision-making consider that:
- The preteen has a limited ability to plan and carry out those plans. They may be able to plan more than they can complete. So avoid giving them more responsibility than they can handle.
- They should begin to sit in on committees and have a voice in planning and making decisions. This is how they will gain experiences that will enable them to handle more responsibility when they reach the teen years.
- In decision-making too many choices or alternatives are confusing to the preteen. Be sure that you only offer them the choices that you are actually willing to accept yourself. And then be certain that you explain the choices clearly and completely. Don’t be surprised if they still want you to make the decision.
- After they make a choice or decision they may want to change it on the basis of some reason that may seem flimsy or trivial to you. That is characteristic of the preteen.

Learning Situations: Different Preteen Responses

You learned in the first two units of this project how preteens have certain characteristics that enable us to generalize about them and to group them into categories for the sake of study. But you also know from experience that no two individuals are alike. Each person is different and somehow unique. Would we have it any other way?

In trying to arrange learning experiences for children, leaders need to be especially aware of some common differences in how kids respond. Youngsters (and all people, in fact) have many complex combinations of personality characteristics. These different combinations of personality characteristics will cause children of the same level of intellectual ability to respond differently to the same situations. Some reasons why children respond differently follow:
Distractability—Some kids are distracted very easily. Their attention is easily attracted to things other than the topic at hand. This often seems to be a problem to a teacher or leader. But some kids are just that way. Some are easily distracted and never seem to be paying attention, but somehow they often show a remarkable grasp of what has been presented. Other kids can pay close attention for a little while, but then their
minds go off somewhere else and they lose track of what is going on. It takes patience to deal with these kinds of kids.

**Attitudes towards new experiences**—Some youngsters are quick and eager to accept and try out new experiences or ideas. They jump right into things and do what is asked—even more sometimes. And they show genuine enthusiasm. Other youngsters who may be just as intelligent will avoid new experiences and be very slow to get involved. Their first reaction to anything new or unfamiliar may be suspicion or distrust. This type of child may be reserved and cautious and it will take time for him or her to feel relaxed and at ease enough to really get into the new situation enough to learn from it. But if given time this child may accomplish as much as the more eager type.

**Intensity of feelings**—Some kids show strong emotions and strong responses to situations. The responses may be either positive or negative. But they will be strong. This is the emotional type of child. Their moods may take dramatic swings in short periods of time. They may do good work when their moods are right but you can often expect some of their mood changes to get in their

What teaching methods or techniques work best for you?
Suggestions for Interview Activities

In some of the activities you will be interviewing other people for their opinions and ideas on preteens. You will be a roving reporter, so to speak!

Be sure to fully explain the purpose of the interview to those you wish to interview. Tell them something about your project, and how you will use the information they give. In some cases you may share the information with other members of your project.

Ask them for permission to interview. When the interview is over, thank them for their time and their willingness to help.

When interviewing, use the questions that are given as guidelines. But feel free to branch off into other related topics that are of interest to you or the person being interviewed. You may pick up additional bits of good information or valuable insights this way.

Project Activities

This section contains your project activities. The activities are just as important as, if not more important than, the informational material given in this manual because it is through the activities that you will actually do things for yourself and with others. It is only through experience that the project information will become meaningful in its fullest sense.

So take the activities seriously. The more sincere your effort, the more meaningful and valuable will be the experience.
Activity One
Lead Your Own Group

On your own or with a teen partner lead a preteen group for a minimum of five sessions. (Examples: 4-H, church school, Little League, YMCA, YWCA, day camp, Boys Club, etc.) During this activity keep a log or journal of your experiences and observations. When completed, summarize your experiences by completing the following:

Briefly explain and summarize your experiences in this activity:

Some things I learned from the experience (about myself, about preteens, about kids in groups, etc.) were:
Activity Two
Preteens and Delinquency

Interview two different persons whose jobs bring them into direct contact with youth who have problems of social behavior—in trouble with the law or other authorities. Although many juvenile offenders or delinquents are in their teen years, the causes for their deviant behavior (problem behavior) probably stems from earlier years. Try to gain insights into the causes of such problems from two different people who work with troubled youth.

Interview One

1. What are your views on reasons why children (preteens) get into trouble with the law or other authorities?

2. What do you think that children need most from parents, teachers, and others for successful social adjustment?

3. What are some differences, if any, in the types of problems and troubles that boys have as compared to girls?

4. Some kids are considered or labeled “juvenile delinquent” while others are not. What are the differences?

5. Why do you think kids do things that they should know are likely to get them into trouble?

6. What are some things that can be done for the delinquent child?
7. Are there some common or typical reasons for the following types of delinquent activities?

   Truancy (skipping school)

   Running away from home

   Stealing

   Shoplifting

   Use of drugs (includes alcohol)

   Promiscuity (indiscriminate sexual relations)

   Uncontrollability (by parents, teachers, and others)

   Other forms of problem behavior

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**Interview Two**

1. What are your views on reasons why children (preteens) get into trouble with the law or other authorities?

2. What do you think that children need most from parents, teachers, and others for successful social adjustment?
3. What are some differences, if any, in the types of problems and troubles that boys have as compared to girls?

4. Some kids are considered or labeled “juvenile delinquent” while others are not. What are the differences?

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   - Stealing
   - Shoplifting
   - Use of drugs (includes alcohol)
   - Promiscuity (indiscriminate sexual relations)
   - Uncontrollability (by parents, teachers, and others)
   - Other forms of problem behavior
Activity Three
Ask the Parents

Visit with and talk with mothers and fathers of preteen youngsters—two mothers and two fathers. Try to get their feelings about preteens in relation to the following questions.

**Mother Interview One**

1. What do you see as special problems, worries or concerns about children of this age?

2. What do you see as special joys or rewards of having a preteen child?

3. What is the most fun about having a child of this age?

4. What are the most irritating characteristics of this age group?

5. How do you as a parent feel about the topics of:

   - Allowances?

   - Chores and responsibilities?

   - Discipline and behavior problems?
**Father Interview One**

1. What do you see as special problems, worries or concerns about children of this age?

2. What do you see as the special joys or rewards of having a preteen child?

3. What is the most fun about having a child of this age?

4. What are the most irritating characteristics of this age group?

5. How do you as a parent feel about the topics of:
   - Allowances?
   - Chores and responsibilities?
   - Discipline and behavior problems?

**Mother Interview Two**

1. What do you see as special problems, worries or concerns about children of this age?
2. What do you see as special joys or rewards of having a preteen child?

3. What is the most fun about having a child of this age?

4. What are the most irritating characteristics of this age group?

5. How do you as a parent feel about the topics of:
   Allowances?
   
   Chores and responsibilities?
   
   Discipline and behavior problems?

**Father Interview Two**

1. What do you see as special problems, worries or concerns about children of this age?

2. What do you see as special joys or rewards of having a preteen child?
3. What is the most fun about having a child of this age?

4. What are the most irritating characteristics of this age group?

5. How do you as a parent feel about the topics of:
   Allowances?
   Chores and responsibilities?
   Discipline and behavior problems?

Summarize below your observations and thoughts after your interviews with the parents.

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Activity Four
As Seen by Teachers and Youth

Interview two different teachers or other leaders of children of the 9-12 age range. Besides teachers, examples of other leaders you could interview are scout leaders, 4-H leaders, camp counselors, coaches or recreational program leaders. Get their responses to the following questions:

**Interview One**
1. How much and what kinds of experience have you had in working with preteen youngsters?

2. What do you see as typical characteristics of the 9-12 year old age range?
3. What types of things do they seem to especially enjoy?

4. What are some typical or common dislikes of the preteen youngster?

5. What do you see as special challenges in working with the preteen age group?

6. Are there special rewards or things that you especially enjoy about preteens?

7. What are some common differences in attitudes or behavior that you have observed between preteen boys and girls?

8. How do you deal with or involve the shy or timid child?

9. What are your ideas about discipline and behavior problems?

10. What are your views on dealing with or involving parents?

11. How does being with a group of other youngsters affect the behavior of the individual child?

12. What are your views on the personality characteristics and qualities needed to work successfully with preteen youngsters?

13. Do you have suggestions on communicating or relating successfully with preteens?
14. Why do you think you have chosen to work with the preteen age group?

**Interview Two**

1. How much and what kinds of experience have you had in working with preteen youngsters?

2. What do you see as typical characteristics of the 9-12 year old age range?

3. What types of things do they seem to especially enjoy?

4. What are some typical or common dislikes of the preteen youngster?

5. What do you see as special challenges in working with the preteen age group?

6. Are there special rewards or things that you especially enjoy about preteens?

7. What are some common differences in attitudes or behavior that you have observed between preteen boys and girls?

8. How do you deal with or involve the shy or timid child?

9. What are your ideas about discipline and behavior problems?
10. What are your views on dealing with or involving parents?

11. How does being with a group of other youngsters affect the behavior of the individual child?

12. What are your views on the personality characteristics and qualities needed to work successfully with preteen youngsters?

13. Do you have suggestions on communicating or relating successfully with preteens?

14. Why do you think you have chosen to work with the preteen age group?

My 4-H Project Story

Include in your story responses to the following:
• After your experiences in this project relate the differences in responsibility of being a group member as opposed to being the leader or teacher of a group.
• What are some ways that you can apply what you learned in this project to other areas of life?

• Since you began this project, in what ways have your ideas changed about children? About parents? About teachers or leaders?

• Would you recommend this project to others? Why or why not?