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Creative Intervention in the Pre-school

Phyllis Taube MacEwan

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CREATIVE INTERVENTION IN THE PRE-SCHOOL

[The following are excerpts from *Liberating Young Children*, a pamphlet available from the New England Free Press, 791 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02118 for 25¢.]

Four boys were playing on a metal climbing structure, their rocket. One girl started to join them.

"Only boys on the rocket. You can't play here, Sarah," commanded Victor.

Sarah came up to her teacher and said complainingly, "They won't let me play with them."

The teacher and Sarah approached the rocket, and the teacher said, "The rocket is for everyone to use. Find a way for Sarah to play with you."

"Okay," replied Victor accomodatingly. "She can be our helper. She can cook and take care of the rocket."

"Sarah has good ideas. She can play the way you are playing." Sarah then joined the boys on the rocket. Only Victor seemed annoyed and disconcerted. But after playing with Sarah for a while, Victor appeared to give up his belief that rockets were for males only. At least temporarily he was relating to Sarah as a person and co-pilot, rather than as a girl who should be excluded.

* * * * *

Two boys in a four-year-old group were very competent at carpentry and worked with wood every day. The teacher noticed how these boys continually made fun of two girls who occasionally joined them at the carpentry table. These two girls, who were less skilled, would leave the carpentry table when the boys made fun of them. They were obviously embarrassed by their incompetence: the boys could use the tools better than they.

Instead of confronting the boys for the way they made fun of the girls, the teacher decided to institute female and male periods at the carpentry table. Her purpose in doing this was to give the girls an opportunity to become more self-confident in woodworking without the pressure of the boys' ridicule and competition. (It should be mentioned that these two boys did not make fun of other boys who were as unskilled as the girls.)

After a few months of these male-female times at carpentry, the two girls who had initially shown so much interest in carpentry became as skilled as the boys who had made fun of them. And girls who had never participated before began to join in. . . the teachers never compared the work of different children, but encouraged them to assist each other. At the end of the year, all of them worked with the teacher building one structure—a collective achievement.

Phyllis Taube MacEwan

Dear Feminist Press, 11/7/72
We are a group of kids from East Hill Elementary School doing a project on Womens Role in Society. Through-out History. We are intrested in making a list of sexist books for kids, and writing letters to the publishers. . . . Could you please send us more information about sexist books for our list and nonsexist books to order for our library.
Do you know of any places where we could take a field trip near us or in New York City.
Please send us any other information you have that we would be interested in.

Signed,
Womans Role Group
East Hill School
116 N Quarry st.
Ithaca N.Y. 14850
Carrie Kartman
Bari Kligerman
Leslie Machesney
BECKY DAUGHERTY
Claire Schwartz
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SIXTH GRADER SPEAKS OUT

Here are some of the personal experiences I've had at school with my teachers. At the end of French class, the French teacher said, "The boys can leave now."

All the girls said, "Why can't we leave now?"

The teacher said, "You have to help clean up, you future housewives."

At the end of art class, the art teacher said that it was time to clean up. A couple of boys pretended to cry. The art teacher said, "Come on! You sound like girls."

At my coed gym class we were playing dodge ball and my male chauvinist gym teacher said that the girls could only be hit by the soft plastic balls and the boys with the hard rubber balls. . . .

In school I looked around in the classes of first and second graders. I saw some children having an art lesson. The boys were drawing footballs, cars, and trucks while the girls were drawing flowers, dolls, and girls in very pretty dresses.

You don't just learn English, math, social studies and science in school. You also learn how to be a boy or a girl, and that very different behavior is expected of each of you.

Judith Starr Wolff