



## Helping Kids Understand Gender Nonconformity: An Interview with Jacob



Magination Press Family had the opportunity to interview Jacob, the subject of *Jacob's Room to Choose*, a picture book by Sarah and Ian Hoffman. Jacob and his friend, Sophie, are gender nonconforming kindergartners. In this case, that means they both wear clothes usually associated with the opposite gender. In the story, Jacob and Sophie get chased out of the boys' and girls' bathrooms, respectively, because other kids don't think they belong based on their appearance. Jacob's teacher, Jacob, and his classmates help teach other kids in the school that bathrooms are for everyone, and everyone should get to choose which bathroom they'd like to use. In the interview, Jacob shares his feelings, experiences, and favorite things.

**MP:** In *Jacob's Room to Choose*, we learn about how other kids reacted to you in the bathroom at school. How did their reactions make you feel?

**Jacob:** Bad.

**MP:** Can you tell me more?

**Jacob:** Sometimes I was mad. Sometimes I was scared. I just wanted to use the bathroom and be left alone.

**MP:** Did it help knowing Sophie was having the same problems?

**Jacob:** It was better not being the only one. But Sophie felt bad, too.

**MP:** Did the lesson Ms. Reeves taught your class help?

**Jacob:** The kids in our class knew us, so they didn't bother us so much. It was mostly the big kids. But having everyone help teach the big kids was good. Everybody in school learned to leave other people alone in the bathroom. That made things better.

**MP:** How do you manage other public bathrooms?

**Jacob:** My parents go in with me. Or they send me with a group of friends, so I'm safe.

**MP:** How do you feel when people think you're a girl?

**Jacob:** I don't mind. Usually I don't correct them, because it takes too long. But if I'm going to know them, I tell them I'm a boy. Otherwise they get embarrassed. Like my art teacher! She thought I was a girl all year. When she found out I was a boy, she said, "Why didn't you tell me?!" She was really upset, but I wasn't. What's wrong with being a girl?

**MP:** What would you like other kids to know about you?

**Jacob:** I like the things I like, just like everybody else likes the things they like. I don't really like it when you make a big deal about the way I look.

**MP:** Thank you for sharing your story with us in *Jacob's New Dress* and *Jacob's Room to Choose*. Do you have another book in mind?

**Jacob:** Sarah and Ian asked me what I want people to know. There's lots of things, so I'm helping them with another book.

**MP:** Do you have a favorite book?

**Jacob:** My big book of Norse myths.

**MP:** What do you like to do at recess?

**Jacob:** I like make-believe best. And tree climbing.

**MP:** What's your favorite flavor of ice cream?

**Jacob:** Coconut.

**MP:** Coconut. Seriously?

**Jacob:** The ice cream parlor near our house sells three different kinds!

**MP:** Do you know what flavor of ice cream is Sophie's favorite?

**Jacob:** She orders pistachio. I think that's her favorite.

**MP:** Thanks for talking with us, Jacob! We hope you and Sophie have a great summer vacation.

To learn more about Jacob and the authors of *Jacob's Room to Choose*, visit the authors' [website](#).

### **This Article's Author**

Sarah and Ian Hoffman live in the San Francisco Bay Area with their two children. Visit their website for more about their books and parenting experiences.

### **Jacob's Room to Choose**

When Jacob tries to use the boy's bathroom, he is mistaken for a girl and chased out. After Jacob's friend Sophie faces the same situation, their class gets together to make things better.

Jacob, the beloved character who made national headlines by wearing a dress to school, is back in an encouraging story about gender expression.