

Action Research Project:

Social Problem Solving

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April 20, 2015

ED495

## Action Research Entry 1: Introduction (February 9, 2015)

This action research project was conducted during the spring 2015 semester. The school demographics were a suburban public elementary school serving grades Kindergarten through fourth grade. Roughly 43% of the school's population was students who qualified for free or reduced lunches. The district demographics were as follows; 89.6% Caucasian, 3.1% African American, 4.1% Asian American, 7.4% Hispanic, and 1.6% other. This research was conducted in a second grade classroom comprised of sixteen students. There were seven female students and nine males students who made up the classroom population. Of these students two were African American, five were Hispanic, and nine were Caucasian. One student received ELL services and two students received pull out special education related services.

As a student teacher in this classroom I have noticed a common problem amongst many of the students. These students have difficulty solving social problems independently and rely on their teacher/s to solve any personal disputes or problems. There are four students in the classroom who come to the teacher with a social dispute on average of more than five times a day. Examples of such disputes include problems such as someone said something hurtful, someone didn't follow directions, someone didn't wait their turn for something.

These students make no attempt to solve the dispute on their own but immediately following an incident or witnessing an incident report the problem to the teacher. This wastes a great deal of valuable instruction time and seems to have a negative effect on the teacher/student relationship. Since students do not seem to

have any knowledge or use of problem solving strategies nor understand what constitutes as something to report to a teacher or adult I would like to research into ways to explicitly teach students strategies to solve social problems independently and to distinguish what needs to be reported to a teacher and what can be solved by students.

Part of my own teaching philosophy is that teachers should educate students as a whole. I am an advocate of moral and peace education and feel that students should be given strategies and ways to deal with conflict resolution in a peaceful and productive manner. I have spent a semester researching peace education and moral education and believe I bring a great deal of background knowledge to my classroom in working with students in regards to social problem solving. I believe that through this action research I will gain more first hand experience in putting peace education into practice and become better at classroom management and develop a better overall classroom climate. My research question for this project is as follows: How do students who have difficulty with social problem solving respond to direct instruction on appropriate problem solving strategies?

#### Action Research Entry 2: Action Plan (February 22, 2015)

After completing some informal observations and consulting with teachers and other professionals I have come up with a plan of action for my research question. The goal of my research is to learn more about ways to teach children about the importance of reporting serious threats and issues to teachers and how tattling can have a negative impact on friends and teachers. I am also hoping to

equip students with several strategies for them to learn to distinguish what constitutes tattling and when they should come and talk to adults. In addition, I plan to give students strategies to deal with their own problems instead of resorting to tattling. As a teacher I hope to learn peaceful strategies to help students deal with conflict resolution. I also hope to gain a deeper understanding of how students internalize problems and ways to solve their problems.

My plan to meet these goals and objectives would be to plan and implement some lessons presented to students during class meeting times. These lessons would be designed to teach students about reporting important issues to adults and learning what tattling is and why it is viewed negatively. These lessons will include stories and discussions, case scenarios, and a “Rules for Tattling” poster created by the class and signed by the class as a pledge to stop tattling. After the lessons have been taught, students who are found tattling will be reminded to read the poster and class pledge they helped to create and sign and reevaluate whether or not this is an issue they need to talk to an adult about. I will also collect more data throughout the school day during transition times on how frequently students come to the teacher with social problems, whether or not they are serious issues or cases of tattling, and qualitative data in the form of how students respond to the scenarios they are given during the class meetings.

My timeline for my action plan will be two weeks of data collection prior to implementation of lessons, which will take place throughout the school day primarily during transition times, since this seems to be when the most tattling occurs. I will also implement two twenty-minute class meetings from 2:50-3:10pm

focused on addressing tattling and reporting across a two-week time span. During the first meeting students will be asked to share what they know about tattling. Students will then be read a book titled “A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue” by Julia Cook, a story in which a boy has a problem tattling on everyone. After hearing the story students will explain the boy’s problem and how he overcame his problem. The book gives examples of tattling and when are times students should come to adults with issues. The book also gives four rules for tattling. Students will work to create a tattling poster with the rules for tattling. Then everyone will sign the poster stating they will follow these tattling rules to ensure they do not tattle.

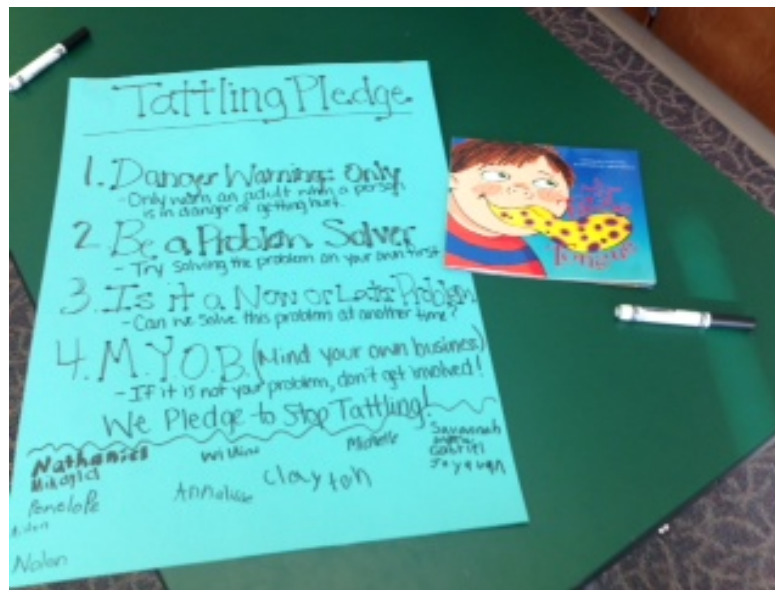
During the second class meeting time students will review the story they read about tattling and their tattling pledge. Following the review of the previous lesson students will talk about ways they see tattling happen at school and home. They will then be put into small groups to brainstorm some ways the people in the examples shared could have solved their own problems instead of tattling. Groups will be allowed to share their solutions. Students will be given two case studies about tattling and reporting. In one case the child was tattling and another was an instance where the child needed to report something to an adult. Students will be asked to respond to the scenarios with how they would have handled the situation if they were the children in the scenario and why. Students will hand in their responses and as a class will discuss their answers and reasoning why.

Data will be collected in a variety of ways. Quantitative data will be collected through teacher recordings and observations on how frequently students are tattling on others before the class meetings and after the class meetings for a total of

five weeks. I will also record what kinds of issues students are coming to the teacher with (cutting in line, hurtful things said to another student, threats). Qualitative were also be collected. The student created tattle poster/pledge as well as the reflections on the case scenarios will serve as qualitative data on what students are taking away from the lessons. I will also take notes during the discussion time as a way of capturing reasons and examples students are giving on when they see tattling and how they would respond when they see tattling or social problems occur.

### Action Research Entry 3: Reflection on Intervention, Part I (March 15, 2015)

On February 20, I implemented my first lesson plan (see appendix A). During this first lesson I asked students to share what they knew about tattling. Many students seemed to have a general understanding that tattling was not a positive thing but were not as clear on what constitutes tattling and what should be reported to an adult. Some of the things students shared for what they knew about tattling were: "Tattling is telling on someone." "Tattling is bad because it makes people mad at you." "When you tattle on people they get mad and stop talking to you." After students discussed what they knew about tattling I read the story "A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue" by Julia Cook (2005) to students. Once I was finished reading the story students worked to create their own classroom tattle pledge based off the book and what they learned about tattling and then students signed the pledge as a way of showing they plan to follow what they created.



Since implementing the first lesson I have noticed students frequently looking at the pledge and reading it over. I have even heard two students tell their peers to read the pledge when they begin to tattle to another peer. I have not noticed a decrease in tattling incidents; they seem to be approximately the same amount of incidents with the same students as before the first lesson was implemented (see appendix B). I am however telling students to refer back to the pledge if they come up to me and begin tattling. I will ask them if this is a now or later problem, if someone is in danger, and if it is something they have tried to solve on their own. I think students need to have another lesson on ways they can solve their own problems in a positive and safe manner. Students seem to grasp the concept of what is tattling when asked to explain but cannot apply it into their own lives. I feel for my next lesson I will focus more on how students can solve their own problems and ask students to give examples from their own lives to make more connections with what I am teaching them.

In moving forward with my research I still need to deliver the second lesson to students. I will be curious to see whether or not there is a decline in tattling once students are given strategies to solve their own problems. I plan to continue tracking how frequently students are tattling throughout the school day. I want to also be aware of whether or not I see students using one of the strategies to solve their own problems. I plan to collect a case study that students will complete in the next lesson where they are given a story about a boy who is tattling and what the boy could have done differently that would have allowed him to solve his problem without tattling. From these case studies I will track if students are able to think of ways to solve problems appropriately without needing to tattle by reading their responses to see if they have used a peaceful strategy that allows them to solve their problem independently instead of telling an adult.

#### Action Research Entry 4: Reflection on Intervention, Part II (March 29, 2015)

On February 27, I implemented my second lesson plan. This lesson was to follow up on what students had discussed during my first lesson and expand on how to appropriately handle social problems. After reviewing the previous lesson, students seemed to remember the rules for tattling, how to distinguish tattling from an emergency situation, and their commitment to stop tattling. The second part of the lesson was students responding to a scenario situation (see appendix C). Students responded to a situation in which a boy tattled on a peer. Students had to first identify whether or not the boy was tattling and defend their answer. Then students had to write down a way they would have handled the situation that would



have been appropriate problem solving. After students responded to the case scenario, the class spent time in discussion sharing their answers and defending their responses.

Since implementing the second lesson I have noticed a few students attempting to solve problems on their own. I have witnessed two different students using the strategies we discussed throughout the two lessons to talk out their problems with their peers. I still have students coming to another teacher or myself to tattle on another student on a daily basis. I continue to refer students to the tattle pledge and remind them of our discussion on ways to solve a problem. I feel that students will need to be reminded of this for a while until they begin to realize that a teacher is not going to solve their problems for them. I think once students begin to use the strategies we have discussed they will begin to realize they can solve their own problems and that other students will respond positively to their actions instead of viewing them as “tattle tales”. I hope that once more students begin to solve their own problems instead of resorting to tattling more and more students will begin to follow suit.

In moving forward I feel that I need to implement some form of positive reinforcement for students. I think that I would increase the likelihood of students solving problems independently if I made a big deal out of situations where I see students solving their own problems. I could have a badge or token that students could earn if they solved their own problems instead of tattling. If students see other students being praised for their behaviors and actions it would motivate other students to do the same. Once students begin solving their problems and there is a

decrease in tattling students will become stronger problem solvers and there will be fewer incidents of tattling.

#### Action Research Entry 5: Conclusions and Final Reflection (April 18, 2015)

The purpose of my action research was to help students learn about social problem solving and learn strategies to help them with conflict resolution. My question throughout this research project was: How do students who have difficulty with social problem solving respond to direct instruction on appropriate problem solving strategies? My course of action for this research project was to first record basic data about what students were tattling about, how frequently they were tattling, the number of students who tattled, and what specific problems students came to the teacher about. I then implemented two lessons on tattling and ways to eliminate tattling. Students created and signed a "Tattle Pledge" and discussed a case scenario on tattling. I continued to collect data during and after implementing the lessons to track any changes in the amount and types of tattling that occurred in the classroom.

As a result of my research I have found that direct instruction does seem to have an effect on student's response to social problem solving. While there weren't huge differences between the data recorded on the amount of tattling students did in the classroom there were instances that students revisited the pledge they created and reminded peers of what the pledge said. I was able to read student work and responses and see that they were able to recall strategies for social problem solving discussed during lessons and apply the strategy to a case scenario. I learned

that it is hard to monitor “progress” because one cannot monitor all instances of social interaction between students and record their response to the situation.

Aspects of my plan that worked the best were implementing discussions on tattling and creating a “Tattle Pledge”. During the lessons students were very engaged in what we were discussing and were active participants as every student offered something to the conversation at least once. I also found the pledge to be successful because students were eager to create the pledge and in many cases were found reading/looking at the pledge and reminding other students to review the pledge. Aspects of my plan that did not go as well were evaluating the effectiveness of my interventions. It was hard to objectively measure whether or not students were benefiting from my interventions. It was also difficult because I could not track data for every incident and moment of the day. My data collection only occurred at specific times and does not track tattling throughout the entire day. I also had difficulty tracking when students were using social problem solving strategies effectively because if I did not directly hear students I was unaware of whether or not they were solving a conflict.

If I was to implement this plan again there are a few aspects I would change or do differently. One thing I would do differently is to record whom the students were who were tattling and track if they showed a decrease in tattling frequency. While I tracked the number of students tattling I did not specifically record who was tattling and when to measure if those students who tattled the most frequently tattled less after my interventions. I would also implement more lessons over a longer span of time to have more of a lasting effect on students. I would also put into

place a conflict box where students could anonymously submit a conflict or problem they were having and as part of class meetings create case studies from the conflict cards and discuss ways students could respond to the conflict as a way of helping students think of more solutions to social problems.

In conducting this action research I have learned a great deal about my students and teaching. This research has taught me the importance and value of teacher research. No one better understands the workings of their students and classroom than the teacher and it is important that as teachers we conduct research in an effort to learn more about our students and effective ways to make teaching and the classroom a better learning environment. I learned how much effort and time goes into conducting research and analyzing data in order to create effective and meaningful interventions. Teaching as a profession is always changing and developing. As teachers we must work to stay current and implement new research based programs and interventions with our students. From this research I learned that students need direct instruction on how to handle social problems and conflict resolution. I also learned that while students may understand on paper what social problem solving looks like and ways to solve problems they may have it takes a lot more instruction and practice for students to be able to put these strategies and knowledge into practice within their daily lives.

## Appendix A: Tattling Lesson

### Lesson on Tattling Vs. Reporting

Objective: Students will be able to identify the difference between tattling and reporting, demonstrate understanding of when to tell an adult and when something is tattling.

#### Beginning:

- Introduce the topic of tattling by holding up the book and asking students if they know what the word tattling means. Allow for students to share what they know about tattling
- Next inform students that today we are going to read a book about a boy who has a problem with tattling
  - Tell students that while they listen to the story they should be thinking about what tattling is and ways they can avoid being a tattler

#### Middle:

- Being reading "**A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue**" to the class.
- After reading through the story have students respond to the following questions:
  - What was Josh's problem in the story?
  - How did people respond to Josh's constant tattling?
  - Are there times that telling an adult something is important and not considered tattling? Explain.
  - What were the four rules Josh learned about tattling?
- Write the four rules on a poster as each rule is discussed

The four rules are:

1 **Danger Warnings ONLY!**

*Only warn an adult when a person is in danger of getting their body hurt.*

2 **Be a Problem Solver**

*If the problem involves you, try to solve the problem yourself first.*

3 **Is this a NOW or LATER problem?**

*Can we solve this problem at another time?*

4 **M.Y.O.B – "Mind your own business"**

*If the problem does not belong to you, don't get involved in it!*

- Once students have finished sharing and discussing the four rules of tattling inform students that this poster is going to hang in the classroom to remind students about tattling

#### Ending/ Wrap up

- Have students come up and sign the poster. As they are signing the poster let students know that them signing the poster is an agreement that they will follow the rules of tattling.
- "When a person tattles, their goal is to get someone into trouble. When someone reports their goal is to prevent someone from getting hurt."

<http://www.schcounselorschronicle.com/2012/04/bad-case-of-tattle-tongue.html>

## Appendix B: Data Collection

## Action Research Tattling Track Sheet

## Prior to Intervention

Date	Time	Number of Tattling Incidents	Number of Students Tattling	Specific examples
2/10/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	7	5	"Justin wrote with pen during writing class instead of pencil." "I was behind Nina in line and James cut in front of me." "Sarah was talking in the hall."
2/11/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	9	4	"Dylan stuck his pencil in the erasers." "Landon was playing in the sink during our bathroom break."
2/12/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	8	5	"Colin has a paper airplane in his desk." "Jessica collected the papers and that isn't her job."
2/16/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	6	3	"Mason was running in the hall." "Jamie didn't share the Legos at recess."
2/18/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm;	7	4	"Marco was doing his

	3:25pm-3:50pm			homework during math." "Renee worked ahead in her grammar packet."
2/19/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	5	2	"Jenna stuck her tongue out at Shayla."

\*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality

#### During and After Interventions

Date	Time	Number of Tattling Incidents	Number of Students Tattling	Specific Examples
2/23/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	6	3	"Kyle was talking when he was supposed to be reading." "Lilly cut in front of me during lunch."
2/24/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	7	5	"Justin was drawing on his math journal." "Faith told Megan to shut up."
2/26/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	8	4	"Matt ran in the hall."
3/2/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	5	3	"Jamie used pen for her rough draft."
3/3/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	6	3	"Sarah cut in line." "Juan wouldn't let me have the glue stick when he was

				finished.”
3/5/15	10:05am-10:10am; 11:45am-12:30pm; 3:25pm-3:50pm	4	4	“Mason told Jill her shirt was ugly.” “Shayla was reading during bathroom break instead of practicing her math flashcards.”

\*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality



## Appendix C: Case Study

## Case Study: Brian

Brian is a second grade student at Red Apple Elementary. He enjoys school and his favorite subject is Math. Brian's hobbies are soccer, basketball, and video games. One afternoon he was at the library looking for a new book to read. He was looking through the books on soccer. As he reached for a book his classmate Robbie came over and grabbed the book off the shelf just as Brian was about to get it. Brian went over to his teacher, Miss Honey and said, "Robbie just took the book I wanted and I saw it first."

Was Brian tattling? Why or why not?

If you were Brian how might have you handled the situation differently?

## References

NJSchCounselor. (2012, April 6). A bad case of tattletale tongue [Blog post]. Retrieved from The School Counselor's Chronicle website:  
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