

## Tattling versus Telling

While it is difficult to discern the difference between tattling and telling when a student is informing you about it, teaching them that the key difference is why they are giving you the information.

Telling is when you are getting help from someone who needs help, tattling is telling to get someone in trouble.

### *Educating kids on this:*

Simply going over it will not alleviate all tattling situations. It becomes important to remind kids about what is their reason for informing you. Even if you have to respond to the broken rule, it is important to inform the telling student that they were informing not to help someone, but rather to get the other student in trouble. For students who persist with tattling, you can also talk to them about telling when others do good things to show that they tend to focus only on getting kids in trouble.

### Background:

Talking to kids about this difference early on can help reduce tattling and whining behavior but also help student later on to understand that getting help for someone being bullied is not “snitching.”

Remember, *Tattling* is about informing you to get someone else in trouble because they have broken a rule or are not doing what was asked of them. Their behavior, while unacceptable is not dangerous or harmful to anyone. Common reasons for tattling among young children is that they are developmentally very focused on rule following or are trying to garner attention from the teacher or another adult. Older kids may use tattling to control others through threats of tattling. Being aware of the reason can be helpful in determining how to educate a child about not using it. Regardless, teaching them the difference and remaining consistent with that about that difference is important.

*Telling*, on the other hand, is about informing you to help someone because their behavior is dangerous to themselves or harmful to someone else. Simply, they are informing so that someone is kept safe. You do need to remind kids that someone may get in trouble when you inform to help, but there is someone who is being helped and that is why you are telling an adult.