Introduction

During the past several years, I've engaged in research that examined the issue of parental aggression toward school administrators. This unique, albeit obscure, educational issue appealed to me because at the time, little, if any, research existed on the topic. The results of my research led me to author the book, *The Confrontational Parent: A Practical Guide for School Leaders.* In addition to containing the results of my research, the book also included anecdotes from school administrators throughout the country on the topic of parental aggression.

I discovered that school leaders were undoubtedly experiencing occurrences of parental aggression, and these same school administrators also wanted their school districts to direct attention toward this issue. As a result of these findings, I decided to create a simple yet effective tool that might assist school administrators during their encounters with aggressive parents. Subsequently, the RAID Approach was born. Although described briefly in my first book, the RAID Approach will now form the foundation of this book, *The Difficult Parent: An Educator's Guide to Handling Aggressive Behavior.* In this effort, however, the application of the RAID Approach will not be featured for use by school administrators exclusively but also by other school personnel, including teachers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, and office personnel. I decided to expand the RAID Approach for use by non-administrative school personnel because, while conducting my research, many of these staff members asked, "Why couldn't we also use the RAID Approach?" In addition, as the result of positive feedback from my first book, I decided that input and anecdotes from school personnel around the country would again be appealing to the reader. Subsequently, *The Difficult Parent* contains chapters that include scenarios in which many types of school personnel can easily observe the workings of the RAID Approach. These scenarios will

appear somewhat familiar to traditional educators because they are based on actual, day-to-day experiences of educators.

The Difficult Parent was written with educational practitioners in mind. Wordy, complicated formulas and cookbook-type instructions are nonexistent. This book simply requires that the reader be familiar with the importance of communication and the difficulties that aggressive individuals may present.

The Difficult Parent is a three-part book. Part 1 discusses the issue of parental aggression as it pertains to educators. Part 2 focuses on an in-depth examination of the RAID Approach and its mechanics. Part 3 discusses the actual implementation of the RAID Approach.

Throughout this book, I will make references to parents who display aggressive or confrontational behavior toward school personnel. This may seem like a negative view of parents and guardians. That being said, it's important to explain that these parents are described for the purposes of this book. Aggressive parents were simply the focus of my research, and they comprise only a small fraction of the parents who interact with school personnel on a day-to-day basis. It goes without saying that the majority of parents are truly a pleasure to work with. Parents remain a vital source of support for school personnel and are often counted on to provide services too extensive to list here. As a social worker, my job is to interact with parents with the hope of overcoming obstacles that may negatively affect their child's school performance. Even in these difficult situations, I can recall few parents who actually presented problems to the extent that communication was impossible.

Nonetheless, certain parents unfortunately exhibit behaviors that make their interactions with school personnel problematic. These are the individuals whom this book addresses. Although the techniques described here could certainly be adapted for use with other aggressive individuals, I dedicated my efforts to the examination of a specific population: parents.