



## Aggression in Our Schools

### Issue

#### *Reaction versus Prevention*

In light of the school violence in our country, one thing is becoming painfully clear: so far, we have only *reacted* to aggression in our schools . . . and that hasn't worked. This fact continues to be reinforced by the discovery of other "Columbine look-alike" scares, which perpetrate violence against students and teachers around our nation.

If our responsibility is the safety of those in our schools, is it not essential that we prevent hazard rather than react to it? If all we intend to do is to react to aggression, we will eventually be confronted with physical violence.

#### *Liability in Schools*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we need a paradigm shift; a shift from reacting to aggression and violence to a *Paradigm of Prevention*. *Davis vs. Monroe County Board of Education*, has profoundly changed the way schools must look at their liability. The US Supreme Court found in favor of a private damages action against a school board in the case of student-on-student harassment. The US Supreme Court, of course, preempts any protection under state's sovereign immunity.

#### *Higher Student Achievement Scores*

ETS - Educational Testing Service has confirmed that there is a direct link between the amount of aggression in schools and student achievement scores in all four subject areas: math, reading, science and social science. We are currently working with Clemson University's National Dropout Prevent Center and the University of Southern Mississippi's Mississippi Safe School Center on a grant titled: *Investigating the impacts of Aggression Management® Skills on Student Academic Achievement*.

#### *Can we identify a School Shooter through profiling?*

U.S. Secret Service and US Department of Education's Report Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools ~ October 25, 2000: 1) There is no accurate or useful profile of the school shooter. 2) Knowing characteristics of such assailants does not advance the appraisal of risk. 3) Instead, an inquiry should focus on student's behaviors and communications to determine if the student appears to be planning or preparing for an attack. (Student behavior, body language and communication are the foundation of our Aggression Management® Skills.)

### Development

As we look at conventional means of managing aggression, we see topics like *Conflict Resolution* and *Anger Management*. *Conflict Resolution* presupposes conflict; you are already reacting, you are already past any opportunity to prevent aggression. If we only train our staff and teachers to respond when two individuals are in *conflict* (nose-to-nose) eventually we will get someone who does not communicate verbally but instead communicates physically and "out of nowhere" strikes out. Worst yet the aggressor may have a weapon and decide to use it. *Anger Management* does not adhere to the *predicate of prevention*: if you can measure it, you can manage it. The problem with *Anger Management* is that we all measure anger differently and therefore experience and express it differently. There is no common denominator for us to measure anger.

There really is a way to prevent aggression and violence in our schools. You must first identify the emergence of aggression, and then measure and manage it before it becomes conflict. The Center for Aggression Management® has developed the Aggression Continuum™ which provides a means to measure the emergence and escalation of aggression in others and in ourselves.

School Districts around the Nation are utilizing Aggression Management® Training to diminish aggression in their schools. Diminished aggression in the schools not only saves lives but also yields higher student achievement scores.