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# Preface

**S**tudent violent writing affects every school administrator, from the elementary principal seeking to foster a creative writing environment to the senior high principal expelling a student for a graphic tale. Public school administrators are facing a unique legal obstacle in today's schools: preventing school violence and encouraging creativity. Schools aim to produce creative thinkers, artists, and writers who can become the next Maya Angelou or Steve Jobs, yet administrators often have a knee-jerk reaction to immediately suppress and discipline dark, graphic student writing, even writing that a student acknowledges is fiction. Administrators dealing with student violent writing must weigh many questions: Is the writing truly threatening? Is the writing fictional? What if a student is simply venting on paper? What guidelines should a school have in place to deal with violent student writing? What is violent student writing? And how do I know if the student behind the writing is truly violent?

## Purpose of This Text

The aim of this text is to provide a solid background to this issue, from an educational, philosophical, and legal standpoint. The writing discussed in this text is *student* violent writing, not to be confused with *violent student* writing—the former being a dark, gruesome, or gory expression by an otherwise harmless student, the latter being the writings of truly disturbed and dangerous individuals. Either is bound to emerge in any school across the nation and sometimes it will be difficult to distinguish between the two. The student writings in these chapters come from several sources, some from within transcripts of published court cases, some rewritten from anecdotes shared by practicing school administrators, and some recreated from my experiences as a high school English teacher. All student identities have been protected.

## Practical Uses for This Text

Each chapter ends in a concise summary in addition to a list of practical suggestions for school administrators at every level. These questions are ideal not only for practicing school administrators but also college students in teacher preparation programs, graduate students in principalship education programs, and practicing teachers in professional learning teams. The book is designed with informative content in the chapters and practical suggestions for implementation of the book's overall ideas. In addition, there are thought-provoking questions for educators to consider about their own practices within their own schools. In these chapters you will find the information you need to become well-versed on how to handle student violent writing in your school while protecting the integrity of student constitutional rights.

## Who Should Read This Book?

If you are a school administrator, college professor, teacher, staff member, volunteer, parent, or concerned community member, you need to read this book. It is simply naïve to say “that would never happen in *my* school.” There is a misconception that student violent writing only occurs in high schools or in urban communities (definitely *not* the ones that *we* live in), but violence is pervasive in every school: K–12, urban or rural, big or small. Students today are exposed to violence on TV, in their homes, and on the Internet and, in turn, they are writing about it, from the third grader drawing a gun pointed at a classmate to a group of high schoolers detailing plans about ways to kill a teacher. Each chapter in this book includes practical applications for K–6 and 7–12 schools as well as some questions for each educator to individually and thoughtfully consider. No one is immune. If you care about your safety and that of your students and children, read this book.

## Three Reasons You Must Read This Text

1. You care about student safety.
2. You are committed to providing a Constitutionally-sound education.
3. You care about the overall character development of the youth in your home, your school, and your community.